

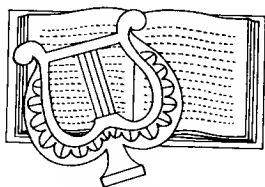
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GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages, and in delineating the character of my hero, I have chosen the ranks of the 2nd Dragoons, not because of any national partiality, but from the desire to describe the adventures of a soldier in a brave old regiment, which has served with distinction in every war since its formation—in short, from the battles of the Covenant to those in the Crimea; which had the proud distinction of capturing the Colours of the Regiment du Roi at Ramillies, the White Standard of King Louis' Household Troops at Dettingen, and the Colour and Eagle of Napoleon's 45th Foot at Waterloo.

Several historical incidents, and one or two traditions of the Service, are interwoven with the story of Basil Gauntlet, the Scots Grey.

I may mention that the misfortunes of his comrade Charters are nearly similar to those which befel an officer of the 15th Hussars prior to the war in the Peninsula; and that the dark story and death of the engineer Monjoy and of Madame d'Escombas formed one of the *causes célèbres* before the Parliament of Paris during the middle of the last century.

EDINBURGH, 1st May, 1864.

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SECOND TO NONE.

CHAPTER I.

BY THE WAYSIDE.

My adventures were my sole inheritance long before I thought of committing them to paper for the amusement of myself, and—may I hope—for the instruction of others.

Wayward has been my fate—my story strange ; for my path in life—one portion of it at least—has been among perils and pitfalls, and full of sorrow and mortification, but not, however, without occasional gleams of sunshine and triumph.

On an evening in the month of February—no matter in what year, suffice it to say that it was long, long ago—I found myself near a little town on the Borders between England and Scotland, with a shilling in my hand, and this small coin I surveyed with certain emotions of solicitude, because it was my *last one*.

I sat by the wayside under an old thorn-tree whereon the barons of Netherwood had hung many a Border outlaw and English mosstrooper in the olden time ; and there I strove to consider what I should do next ; but my mind seemed a very chaos.

In this unenviable condition I found myself on the birthday of my eighteenth year—I, the heir to an old

title and to a splendid fortune—homeless, and well-nigh penniless, without having committed a crime or an error of which conscience could accuse me.

The rolling clouds were gathering in grey masses on the darkening summits of the Cheviot hills in the hollows of which the snows of the past winter lay yet unmelted. The cold wind moaned in the leafless woods, and rustled the withered leaves that the autumn gales had strewn along the highway. The dull February evening crept on, and the road that wound over the uplands was deserted, for the last wayfarer had gone to his home. The sheep were in their pen and the cattle in their fold; no sound—not even the bark of a dog—came from the brown sides of the silent hills, and, affected by the gloomy aspect of Nature, my heart grew heavy, after its sterner and fiercer emotions passed away.

The last flush of sunset was fading in the west; but I could see about three miles distant the gilt vanes and round turrets of Netherwood Hall shining above the grove of leafless trees that surrounded it, and I turned away with a sigh of bitterness, for adversity had not yet taught me philosophy. I was too young.

With the express intention of visiting Netherwood Hall, I had travelled several miles on foot; but now, when in sight of the place, my spirit failed and my heart sickened within me; and thus, irresolute and weary, I seated myself by the side of the way, and strove to arrange my thoughts.

To be brief, I shall describe in a few pages, who and what I am, and how on that sombre February evening I came to be on such unfortunate terms with old Dame Fortune.

My grandfather, Sir Basil Gauntlet, of Netherwood, had so greatly resented his eldest son's marriage with a lady who had no fortune save her beauty, that he withdrew all countenance and protection from him. So far did he carry this unnatural enmity, that by will he bequeathed all his property to the son of a brother, and, with great barbarity, permitted my father to be consigned to the King's Bench prison, by which his commission in the cavalry was forfeited ; and there, though a brave and high-spirited officer, who had served under the Marquis of Granby, he died of despair !

My mother soon followed him to the land that lies beyond the grave ; and thus in infancy I was left, as the phrase is, to the *tender* mercies of the world in general, and my old bruin of a grandfather in particular.

Yet this upright Sir Basil, who was so indignant at his son's penniless marriage, had been in youth one of the wildest rakes of his time. He had squandered vast sums on the lovely Lavinia Fenton—the original Polly Peachum—and other fair dames, her contemporaries ; indeed, it was current in every green-room in London, that he would have run off with this beautiful actress, had he not been anticipated, as all the world knows, or ought to know, by his grace the Duke of Bolton, who made her his wife.

Sir Basil had been wont to drink his three bottles daily, as he said, “ without a hair of his coat being turned.” He had paraded three of his best friends, on three different occasions, for over-night insults of which he had a very vague recollection in the morning ; but then, “ after what had occurred,” what else could he do ? and so after bathing his head and right arm in

vinegar to make his aim steady, he winged them all at Wimbledon Common, or the back of Montagu House.

In London he was the terror of the watch, and would smash all the lamps in Pall Mall or elsewhere, when, after losing perhaps a thousand guineas at White's among blacklegs and bullies, or after carrying the sedan of some berouged fair one through the streets with links flaring before it, he came reeling home, probably with a broken sword in one hand, a bottle in the other, and his pockets stuffed with brass knockers and other men's wigs ; consequently Sir Basil should have remembered the days of his youth, and have tempered the acts of his old age with mercy ; but it was otherwise.

I do not mean to detain the reader by a long history of my earlier years ; for if those of a Cæsar or an Alexander have but little in them to excite interest, still less must the boyhood of one who began the world as a simple dragoon in the king's service.

The good minister of Netherwood, and the English rector on the south side of the Border, frequently besought Sir Basil to be merciful to the orphan child of his eldest son.

" I pray you to recollect, Sir Basil," urged the rosy-faced rector, " that your own marriage was a love-match."

" It must have been so, if all you scandalous fellows at Oxford said truth."

" Why ?"

" For there you said I loved the whole female sex."

The jolly rector laughed so much at the poor jest of the old rake, that the latter actually became commiserate ; or it may be that my mother's death and

my utter desolation, stirred some emotion of shame—pity he had none—in Sir Basil's arid heart ; so, to keep me at a distance from himself, he consigned me on a pittance to the care of his country agent, a certain Mr. Nathan Wylie, who was exceedingly well-named, as he was a canting Scotch lawyer—in truth “a cunning wretch whose shrivelled heart was dead to every human feeling,” and who by the sharpness of his legal practice was a greater terror on both sides of the Border than ever the mosstroopers were of old.

He was the person who had prepared and executed the will which transferred my heritage to my cousin, Tony Gauntlet—a will which he framed with peculiar satisfaction, as he hated my father for making free with his orchard in boyhood, and in later years for laying a horsewhip across his shoulders at the market-cross of Greenlaw, so in his sanctified dwelling I was likely to have a fine time of it !

For ten years I resided with the godly Nathan Wylie, a repining drudge, ill-fed, ill-clad, and poorly lodged, in one of those attics which he apportioned to Abraham Clod, his groom, his pigeons and myself—uncared-for by all ; and not unfrequently taunted with the misfortunes of my parents for whom I sorrowed, and the neglect of my grandfather whom I had learned to abhor and regard with boyish terror.

I picked up a little knowledge of law—at least such knowledge as one might learn in the office of a Scotch country agent in those days. I mastered, I believe, even “Dirlton's Doubts,” and other equally amusing literature then in vogue ; while Nathan Wylie took especial care that I should know all the shorter catechism, and other biblical questions by rote, that I might

be able to repeat them when the minister paid us his periodical visit, though my elbows were threadbare, my shoes none of the best, and my eyes and brain ached with drudging at the desk far into the hours of the silent night, penning prosy documents, preparing endless processes, and not unfrequently writing to dictation such an epistle as the following, which I give *verbatim* as it actually appeared in a Border paper :—

“DEAR SIR,—I am directed to raise an action against you to-morrow for the sum of one penny, together with the additional sum of three shillings and fourpence, sterling, the expense of this notice, if both sums be not paid me before 9 a.m.

“Yours, fathfully in the Lord,

“NATHAN WYLIE.

“To Farmer Flail, &c.”

In early life he had married an old and equally devout female client for the money which he knew well she possessed ; and as that was all he wanted, after her death he never married again, but devoted himself manfully to the practice of the law and extempore prayer—an external air of great sanctity being rather conducive to success in life in too many parts of Scotland.

Poor Nathan has long been laid six feet under the ground ; but in fancy I can still see before me his thin figure, with rusty black suit and spotless white cravat ; his sharp visage, with keen, restless, and cat-like eyes, that peered through a pair of horn spectacles, and with shaggy brows that met above them. Moreover, he had hollow temples, coarse ears, and a tiger-like jaw, which he always scratched vigorously when a case perplexed

him, or with satisfaction when some hapless client was flooded in the field of legal strife.

As years stole on, that keen and honest sense of justice, which a boy seldom fails to feel, inspired me with indignation at the neglect with which my family treated me, and the story of my parents and their fate redoubled my hatred to my oppressors.

My cousin Tony, a harebrained fool, whose mad fox-hunting adventures formed the theme of all the Border side, and who, by my grandfather's lavish and misplaced generosity, was enabled to pursue a career of prodigality and extravagance, came in for a full share of my animosity, for he was wont to ride past me on the highway without the slightest recognition, save once, when, flushed with wine, he was returning from a hunting-dinner.

On that occasion he was ungenerous enough to draw the attention of his groom and whipper-in to the somewhat dilapidated state of my attire, as I was trudging along the highway on some legal message to Farmer Flail at the Woodland Grange.

On hearing their derisive laughter, my heart swelled with suppressed passion, and had a weapon been in my hand, I had struck them all from their saddles.

This crushing existence was not the glorious destiny my boyish ambition had pictured ; but what could I do for a time, save submit ? I had none to guide me —nor father, nor mother, nor kindred were there ; and as a child, I often gazed wistfully at other children who *had* all these, and marvelled in my lonely heart what manner of love they had for one another.

I was conscious of possessing a fund of affection, of kindness and goodwill in my own bosom ; but there it

remained pent up for lack of an object whereon to lavish it, or rather it was thrust back upon me by the repulsive people by whom I was surrounded.

Business over, I would rush away to solitude. Sunk in reveries, vague and deep, I would stroll for hours alone in the starlight along the green and shady lanes, or by the silent shore, where the German sea rolled its creamy waves in ceaseless and monotonous succession on the shingles, or from whence it rippled in the splendour of the moonlight far away—reveries filled less with vain regrets than with visions of a brilliant future, for my heart was young, inspired by hope and thoughts that soared above my present condition, and sought a brighter destiny !

I could remember a time—alas ! it seemed a dream to me now—when I used to repose in a pretty little bed, and when a lady, who must have been my mother, pale and thin and gentle-eyed, and richly-attired too, for her satin dress rustled, and her presence had a sense of perfume, was wont to draw back the curtains of silk and white lace to caress and to kiss me. Once a tear fell on my cheek—it was hot—and she brushed it aside with a tress of her gathered hair.

Was all this a reality, or a dream ? I strove to conjure up when and where I had seen this ; but the memory of it was wavering, and so indistinct, that at times the treasured episode seemed to fade away altogether.

In the long nights of winter I saved up my candles—no easy task in the house of a miser like Nathan Wylie—and, retreating to my attic, read far into the hours of morning ; poring over such novels and romances as were lent me by the village milliner, a

somewhat romantic old maiden, who had been jilted by a recruiting-officer, and for whose memory she always shed a scanty tear, for he fell at the bombardment of Carthage. These books I read by stealth, such literature being deemed trash and dangerous profanity in the godly mansion of Nathan Wylie.

Then when the wind, that tore down the rocky ravines of the Cheviots, howled in the chimneys, or shook the rafters above me, I loved to fancy myself at sea, for the life of a sailor seemed to embody all my ideas of perfect freedom—a bold buccaneer, like Sir Henry Morgan—a voyager, like Drake or Dampier—a conqueror, like Hawke or Boscawen—a wanderer like dear old Robinson Crusoe, or worthy Philip Quarll; and then I went to sleep and to dream of foreign lands, of lovely isles full of strange trees and wondrous flowers, where scaly serpents crawled, and spotted tigers lurked; of cities that were all bannered towers, gilded cupolas and marble temples, glittering in the sunshine far beyond the sea.

A lonely child, I ripened into a lonely lad, and so passed my life, until the coming of Ruth Wylie, an event which fully deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER II.

RUTH WYLIE.

Love occasioned my first scrape in life, and thus it came to pass.

About the period of my aimless existence, detailed in the last chapter, the mansion of Mr. Nathan Wylie received a new, and to him in no way welcome inmate,

in the person of a orphan niece from London, the daughter of a brother who had died in circumstances the reverse of affluent, bequeathing this daughter—then in her sixteenth year—to his care.

This brother's letter—one penned on his death-bed in an agony of anxiety for the *future* of his orphan Ruth—was deeply touching in its simple tenor ; and some of the references therein to years that had long passed away, and to the pleasant days of their boyhood, should have been more than enough to soften even the heart of Nathan Wylie ; but he read it unmoved, with a grimace on his thin mouth and his beetle brows knit.

Then he carefully folded and docketed it among others, with a gleam of irritation in his cat-like eyes ; and equally unmoved by sympathy or compassion did he receive his charge, when she arrived by the stage-coach from London, pale with sorrow, weary with travel, and clad in cheap and simple mourning for the father she had lost.

One generally imagines a Ruth to be solemn, demure, and quiet—something between a little nun and a Quakeress ; but Ruth Wylie sorely belied her name, being a merry, kind, and affectionate girl, with bewitching dark eyes, full of fun and waggersy, especially when uncle Nathan was absent, for she failed to conceal that his hard, short, and dry manner, and his cold, immoveable visage chilled and saddened her.

New and strange thoughts came into my mind now ; and soon I conceived a regard for Ruth, notwithstanding her hideous relation, the lawyer ; for to me old Nathan was a bugbear—an ogre !

Despite his angry and reiterated injunctions, she frequently brought her workbasket or book into the

room where we plodded with our pens, day after day, for she loved companionship, and Nathan's churlish old housekeeper bored her.

Then sometimes, when we would be writing, and she was sewing or reading near us, I might pause, for irresistible was the temptation to turn to the soft and downcast face of Ruth ; and it was strange that however deeply interested in her book—however anxious about her needlework, by some hidden or magnetic influence, she, at the same time paused, and raised her eyelids with a bright inquiring smile that never failed to thrill my heart with joy, to make my hand tremble, and every pulse to quicken, as our glances instantly met and were instantly withdrawn.

"Here is a little bit of romance at last !" thought I ; "already our thoughts and aspirations draw towards each other."

So I resolved to fall in love—most desperately in love with Ruth Wylie—and did so accordingly.

In the full bloom of girlhood, she was at an age when all girls are pretty, or may pass for being so ; but Ruth was indeed charming.

She had very luxuriant hair of a colour between brown and bright auburn ; its tresses were wavy rather than curly, and her complexion was of the dazzling purity which generally accompanies hair of that description, while her eyes were dark, and their lashes black as night.

Our residence in the same house brought us constantly together, and my love ripened with frightful rapidity. In three days my case was desperate, and Ruth alone could cure it. I was sleepless by night—feverish and restless by day ; yet I dared scarcely to

address Ruth, for love fills the heart of a boy with timidity.

On the other hand, it endues a girl with courage, and so Ruth talked to me gaily, laughed and rallied me, while my tongue faltered, my cheeks flushed or grew pale, and my heart ached with love and new-born joy.

There is a strange happiness in the first love of a boy and girl—the magnetic sympathy which draws heart to heart, and lip to lip, in perfect innocence, and without a thought of the future, or of the solemn obligations of life, and of the world—the weary world, which with all its conventionalities, is more a clog to us than we to it.

However, I soon perceived that Ruth changed colour, too, when we met ; and my heart leaped joyously, when playfully she kissed her hand to me at parting. I felt that I loved her dearly and deeply, but how was I to tell her so ?

In all the romances lent to me by my friend, the milliner, the tall and handsome heroes cast their plumed beavers and ample mantles on the ground, and flung themselves on their knees before their mistresses, beseeching them, in piercing accents, to make them the happiest of men, by giving them even the tips of their snowy fingers to kiss ; but I lacked the courage to imitate these striking proceedings ; moreover, I possessed neither velvet mantle nor ostrich plume.

One evening, old Nathan was absent on business, and Ruth and I were seated in the recess of a window, looking at a collection of Hogarth's prints. We sat close, very close together, for the window was narrow, and then the volume was so large that we both required

to hold it. I felt Ruth's breath at times upon my cheek, and our hands touched every time we turned a leaf.

Her pretty bosom, that heaved beneath her bodice, which was cut square at the neck, and somewhat low in front; her snow-white arms, that came tapering forth from the loose falling sleeves of her black dress, and her delicate little hands so bewildered me, that I never saw the prints with which we were supposed to be engrossed. I saw Ruth—Ruth only, and felt all the joy her presence inspired.

I knew that we both spoke at random, and were somewhat confused in our questions and answers; still more confused in our long pauses. I would have given the world to have clasped this plump little Ruth to my breast; yet I dared scarcely to touch her hand.

As we stooped over the print of "*Love à la Mode*," her bent head, her white temple, and rich soft hair touched mine, and she did not withdraw.

For a few seconds we sat thus, head reclined against head; then I panted rather than breathed, as my arm stole round her waist, and my trembling lips were pressed upon her pure forehead.

Mr. William Hogarth was permitted to fall ignominiously on the carpet; and we sat thus entwined in each other's arms for a long time—I know not how long—till the twilight deepened round us, and we were roused from our dream of happiness by a harsh and croaking voice, which exclaimed:

"Fool that I am, not to have foreseen this!"

We started and found ourselves confronted by Mr. Nathan Wylie, whose grey eyes glared in the dusk like those of a polecat, through the rims of his horn spectacles.

Poor Ruth uttered a cry and fled ; but I turned boldly and faced the enemy.

"So, sir," he exclaimed, in a voice that trembled with silly rage ; "so, sir, this is the way you conduct yourself in the house of a God-fearing man, who has saved you from destruction, when your whole family abandoned you ! Is this your gratitude, Master Philander—this the result of those pious lessons which I have sought to instil into you ? But hark you, sirrah, so sure as I stand here——"

"Mr. Wylie," I began, with all the coolness I could assume ; "I beg that you——"

"Peace, you young villain, and don't attempt to bully me !" he thundered out ; but, immediately adopting his usual whining tone, he added : "Peace I say, for I stand here as a rampart between you and destruction—as a watchman unto Israel. But what virtue or honour, piety or morality am I likely to find in one who bears the name of Basil Gauntlet ? After what I have seen to-night, Ruth shall remain a prisoner in her own room, and I must consult with your grandfather about having you sent off to sea, or away from here on any terms."

This would have been welcome intelligence some time ago ; but the presence of Ruth had altered the aspect of everything, and I retired to my attic, less to ponder over the rough manner in which we had been wakened from our dream of joy, than to repeat, react and dream it over and over again, with the sweet conviction that Ruth permitted me to love her, and loved me in return.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEQUEL.

NATHAN WYLIE was as wicked as his word ; and a letter, rehearsing in forcible terms my sinful, ungracious, and godless conduct, was duly despatched to my grandfather at Netherwood Hall.

Pending a reply thereto, Ruth was confined to her own room, and kept securely under lock and key, while I was all but chained to my desk, for Nathan Wylie had an old dread of the enterprising nature of the Gauntlets, and knew not what I might do next.

In our mutual loneliness of position, our hearts naturally drew together, and our love was strengthened by the very barriers her uncle raised between us ; hence I resolved to see Ruth in her own room—her prison it seemed to me ; but this could only be done by the window, and under cloud of night, as her door was locked, and the key was in old Wylie's pocket.

On coming to this resolution, I proceeded at once to put it in practice. Heaven knows, I had no desire but to circumvent old Wylie, and to see my pretty Ruth—to hear her gentle voice, and to be with her, for her smile was the first ray of light that had fallen across my hitherto dark and solitary path.

It was on a gloomy night, early in February, and when the little household were supposed to be all in bed, that, by slipping from the window of my attic, I reached the roof of the stable, the ridge of which I knew to be immediately under the window-sill of Ruth's apartment.

My heart beat lightly, happily, and rapidly, when I saw the shadow of Ruth's figure, thrown in a somewhat colossal outline, however, upon the curtains; and, fortunately, without disturbing Abraham Clod, the groom, I reached the window before Ruth had either retired to rest or extinguished her light.

I know that this clandestine visit was rather a wrong proceeding; but in extenuation I have only to plead the rashness of youth on one hand, and Nathan Wylie's severity on the other; besides, at eighteen one does not value the opinion of the world much, or scan such matters too closely.

On peeping in I saw Ruth pinning up her bright brown hair, and beginning to unfasten the hooks of her bodice; then her dimpled elbows and tapered arms shone white as alabaster in the light of her candle; so I hastened to tap on the window.

"Good Heaven!" she exclaimed, starting round with alarm expressed in her pretty face, and her dark eyes dilated; "what is that—who is there?"

"I, I—don't you know me?" said I, with my nose flattened against a pane of glass.

"Basil—is it Basil?"

"Yes."

"At my window, and at this time of night!" said she, blushing and hastening forward to open the sash; "wait until I get a shawl—I was just about to undress. How very odd; but what do you want?"

"To see you—to speak with you——"

"But, Basil, consider——" said she, trembling.

"I consider nothing," I exclaimed, throwing my arms round her, and kissing her at the window.

"Mercy! take care lest you fall."

"This separation renders me miserable; for two whole days I have not seen you."

Her kiss, so tender and loving, agitated me so deeply that my voice was almost inarticulate.

"And mewed up here, I have been so wretched too, dear Basil," she murmured, while placing her arms caressingly round my neck, as I crept in and closed the window; "how cruel of uncle Nathan to treat us so."

"He has written to my grandfather, and in such harsh terms that more mischief will be in store for me," said I, bitterly

"Take courage, dear Basil," whispered Ruth, as we sat with our arms entwined and cheek pressed against flushing cheek; "those wicked people would seem to have done you already all the harm that is possible."

"I know not; for your uncle spoke of having me sent to sea; and I have heard at times of people being kidnapped by the pressgang."

"The pressgang—you!" exclaimed Ruth, her fine eyes filling with pity and indignation; "they dare not think of such a thing. Are you not the heir to a baronetcy?"

"True—one of our oldest Nova Scotian baronetcies; but so is my cousin Tony, if—if——"

"What?"

"I were sent out of the way, or disposed of for ever."

"Of that title, dearest Basil, neither your grandfather's wicked hatred, nor the cunning of my uncle—alas! that I should have to say so of one so near—can deprive you."

"Between them, however, they have willed away the estates to my cousin Tony Gauntlet, who bids fair to make ducks and drakes of them, even before his

succession comes to pass, for he is deeply involved with jockeys and Jew money-lenders. But I care not what happens, if I am not separated, my sweet little love, from you."

I pressed her to my breast long and passionately.

For several nights I visited Ruth's window in this clandestine manner; and became so expert in the matter, that I actually rubbed the sash of my casement with soap, that it might run smoothly and noiselessly. As yet there came no reply from Sir Basil; but Abraham Clod brought a message from Netherwood, that "he had the gout in both feet, and consequently was unable to write."

Dear to us, indeed, were those stolen interviews, and wild and vague were the plans we began to form for the future—plans chiefly drawn from our romances; but one night we were roused from our happiness by an unlooked-for catastrophe.

Just as I was approaching Ruth's window, a voice exclaimed—

"A thief—a thief! I see un—dang thee, tak' that?"

Then followed a shriek from Ruth, with the explosion of a gun, and a bullet shattered the panes in both sashes, just above my head.

It was the voice of Abraham Clod, our Yorkshire groom, who had been out in the evening crowshooting, and had his gun undischarged, and who in a moment of evil had seen me creeping along the roof of the stable from his attic window, where I saw him peering forth, with a candle in one hand and his gun in the other.

Fearing that if I attempted to return to my own room he might shoot me in earnest—for I saw the

fellow was quickly reloading—fearing also to stay, lest I should place Ruth in a false position, I lingered for a moment irresolutely, and preferred being taken for the housebreaker which I have no doubt honest Clod believed me to be.

At that time I felt that I would rather die than the honour of Ruth should suffer!

I dropped on the roof of the stable just as a second shot broke the tiles under my feet, and confused by this incident, I tumbled heavily to the ground—luckily not into the stable-yard but into a ploughed field.

I rose unhurt, but found that to enter the house by the door, and to regain my attic window, were both impossible now. I struck across the fields, gained the high-road, and took my way into the open country with sorrow and rage in my heart—sorrow for Ruth, and rage at her uncle, whose drudge and fool I resolved no longer to be.

CHAPTER IV.

MY COUSIN TONY.

“UNDER the roof of his home,” says a pleasing writer, “the boy feels *safe*; and where in the whole realm of life, with its bitter toils and its bitterer temptations, will he ever feel *safe* again?”

I had no roof-tree—I had never felt this charming safety or security—this sublime knowledge of home, and keenly came this conviction to my heart, as I walked on that dark February night along the solitary highway, with the rain plashing in my face; for now, as if to add to the misery of my situation, the clouds had gathered in heaven and the rain fell heavily.

An old fir-tree with its thick dark foliage sheltered me for a time. Towards daybreak the weather became fair, and after sleeping for some hours in a hayrick, I set forward again. I knew that I must present but a sorry figure, but cared not. I was always a lover of effect, and hoped it might aid me in my purpose, which was to urge Sir Basil to make some fitting provision for me.

Alas ! I was ignorant that he had actually written to Nathan Wylie, desiring that the pittance allowed me should be withdrawn, and that he was to turn me adrift for ever. The old minister of Netherwood, who was with him when this severe answer was despatched, besought him to "be clement, and to remember that he too had once been young."

"Yes," growled the gruff baronet, "but it is so very long ago that I have forgotten all about it. Zounds !" he added, flourishing his crutch, and smashing a wine decanter, "I'll make that young dog smart for this, as I made his father smart before him !"

His orders Mr. Nathan Wylie would cheerfully have obeyed ; but in the end I may show how the lawyer, even in the matter of the will, *outwitted himself*, as he might, but for the hatred of my father's memory, and his slavish obsequiousness to Sir Basil, have made little Ruth one day Lady of Netherwood, and me, perhaps, his friend for ever.

On that dull February eve I knew nothing of all this, and so trod on for several miles with hope in my breast—hope that I might stir some chord of sympathy in the withered heart of Sir Basil ; but when I drew near Netherwood, and saw its copper vanes and antique turrets shining above the trees, my spirit failed me, and I thought with just indignation of my favoured

cousin Tony, of his probable mockery at the sorry figure I presented, and the quiet insolence of the domestics; so I sat by the wayside inspired only by that bitterness and irresolution which I have described in the opening of my story.

To Nathan Wylie's house I would never return.

I sorrowed for poor Ruth, the sweet companion of so many stolen interviews—the secret love of my boyish heart. But to what end was this sorrow? Marriage and the responsibilities of life had never occurred to me. I felt, like a boy, that I loved Ruth dearly, and that was all.

I would go away somewhere—where, it mattered not; I would seek a path for myself; another time—a year hence, perhaps—I would come back and see Ruth again, if Fortune smiled on me. And with such thoughts as these, my sadness and dejection gave place to the springy and joyous conviction of a young heart—that I was free—absolutely FREE—the master of my own person—the arbiter of my own destiny!

The wide world was all before me, and to leave care and trouble behind should be now my task and duty.

How was this to be achieved? I was the possessor only of a shilling; but greater men than I have begun the world with less.

As these ideas occurred to me, I perceived in the twilight a gentleman with two valets in livery, all well mounted, coming along the road with their nags at a trot. He wore a green sporting suit, with large gilt buttons, yellow buckskin breeches, a jockey cap, and carried a heavy hunting-whip.

As the two valets were not riding behind, but were abreast with their master, and conversing with him in loud and noisy familiarity, I soon recognised my cousin

Tony the Foxhunter, an interview with whom I would fain have avoided ; but he knew me at once, and came brusquely up, checking his horse, with foam upon its bit, so close to me that I was nearly knocked over.

"Zounds, cousin Basil !" said he, insolently, and in the hearing of his valets, "you are in a fine scrape now !"

"How, sir ?" said I, sourly.

"So you have levanted from old Wylie's—or been turned adrift—'tis all one, for making love to his niece—eh—is this true ?"

"I have no confidences to make to you, sir," said I, haughtily, for the idea that I had placed Ruth—she so innocent and pure—in a position so false, filled me with remorse and rage.

"No confidences," stammered Tony ; "eh—damme ?"

"None."

"Oh, it is of no use denying it ; we have just ridden from old Wylie's this morning. We don't blame you for making love to the girl—she is deuced pretty, and we all agreed it was just what we should have done ourselves."

"We—who do you speak of ?"

"Why, Tom, Dick, and myself," he replied, pointing to his servants ; "and no bad judges either of the points and paces of a woman or a horse."

"Rein back from the footpath if you please, Mr. Gauntlet, and permit me to pass," I added, for he had me completely hemmed against a hedge.

"Well, but what are you going to do *now*, for we can have no onhangers idling about Netherwood Hall ?" he exclaimed, imperiously.

Instead of replying, I took his horse by the bridle,

thrust its head aside, and passed disdainfully on, for I saw that he had been dining, and was flushed alike with wine and insolence. Anthony was four years older than I, and had seen much more of the world ; yet, so far as education and accomplishments were concerned, this pet of my grandfather was nearly as ignorant as the grooms and stable-boys who were his constant companions and chosen friends, and who, in those capacities, fleeced him of large sums on the turf, in the tavern, and at the gaming-table.

"Did you hear me speak, fellow?" he thundered out, with an oath, while urging his horse close behind me, as if to ride me down.

Instead of turning, I quickened my pace ; but he and his grooms put spur to their nags and followed me.

"S'blood !" exclaimed Tony, "but this will make you *feel* if you cannot hear me !" and he dealt me a heavy lash across the shoulders with his hunting-whip.

With all the strength and fury that a long sense of unmerited wrong, hardship, neglect, and opprobrium could inspire, I rushed upon this usurper of my patrimony, and in a moment he was torn from his saddle and stretched upon the highway. I wrenched away his whip, and, twisting the lash round my wrist, beat him soundly with the handle.

Being stronger than I, he scrambled up, with his green coat covered with dust and his features inflamed by rage ; he closed with me, swearing frightfully, while his two mounted followers assailed me in the rear with their clubbed whips.

"Lay on, Dick ! lay on, Tom !" he cried repeatedly, "d——n him, beat the beggarly rascal's brains out !"

I received several severe blows on the head and

shoulders, while Tony actually strove to strangle me by twisting my necktie; and in a combat so unequal I must have been defeated and severely handled in the end, had not two men who were clad in long scarlet cloaks, and were mounted on grey horses, interposed, and one who had drawn his sword, exclaimed—

“Hold, fellows, hold! What the devil do you mean—is it murder? Back! on your lives, stand back! Why this cowardly attack of three upon one?”

On this the valets precipitately withdrew a little way; but Tony still grasped my collar, and on perceiving by their dress and accoutrements that the interposers were two Horse Grenadiers or Dragoons, he swore at them roundly, and said—

“What value do you put upon your ears that you dare to accost me upon the highway?”

“Dare!” repeated the soldier, contemptuously.

“Yes, dare!” exclaimed my cousin, foaming with rage. “Be off with you. Do you imagine that a scurvy trooper can scare me? I am Anthony Gauntlet of Netherwood Hall, and in the commission of the peace for this county; so begone I say, or d—n me I’ll put you both in the stocks at the nearest market cross.”

The dragoon laughed, and placed the bare blade of his sword so close to Tony’s neck that he hastily released me and slunk back.

“If you are what you say, sir,” observed the other dragoon, with a singular hauteur in his tone and manner, “a justice of the peace, you should not be brawling thus with people on the king’s highway.”

“Rascal, to whom do you presume to give advice, eh?” roared Tony, choking with passion.

“Double rascal, to you!” thundered out the soldier,

as he wrenched away by a single twitch of his right hand one of the valets' whips, and lashed Tony and his fellows so soundly, and with such rapidity, that they scarcely knew whether they were on the highway or in the air.

He fairly drove them off, while his comrade, who had now sheathed his sword, sat in his saddle and laughed heartily as he looked on.

"Come with us, my lad," said he, "lest those cowardly curs return and fall on you again. There is an inn somewhere near this, I believe—or at least there was when last we marched into England."

"Yes, you mean the 'Marquis of Granby,'" said I, while applying my handkerchief to a cut on my left temple, which bled profusely.

"Ah! that is the place I mean; we must find our quarters there for the night. You will share a glass with us and tell us how this battle came to pass?"

And to this invitation I assented.

CHAPTER V.

THE INN.

My protectors proved to be two of the Second Dragoons, or Scots Greys—a corporal and a private—who had been escorting a couple of prisoners, captured smugglers, to the Tolbooth of Dunbar, and who were proceeding to rejoin their regiment, which was then quartered at the nearest market town on the English side of the Border.

"Kirkton, what did that fellow with the jockey cap call himself?" asked the corporal.

"I scarcely heard ; but he said he was a justice of the peace."

"A rare one, certainly ! But he cannot meddle with us, Tom, for we are on duty until we rejoin. Why did he attack you, my lad ?" asked the corporal, turning to me ; "were you poaching ?"

"No," said I, angrily, though the state of my attire perfectly warranted the inference ; "but here is the inn."

It was a common wayside hostelry, where the Berwick stages changed horses in those days—a two-storied house, with a large stable-yard behind and an ivy-clad porch in front ; over the latter hung a square signboard that creaked in the wind on an iron rod, and bore a profile of the Marquis of Granby in a bright red coat and white brigadier wig, with the information beneath, that within was "good entertainment for man and beast."

The landlord knit his brows and muttered something surly, under his breath however, on seeing the two dragoons approach ; but Jack Charters, the corporal, presented a slip of printed paper, saying—

"How are you, old boy ? Here is our billet order."

"From whom ?" growled Boniface.

"The billet master. To-morrow it will be from a constable, but then we shall be in England."

Perceiving that the host scowled at the document—

"It is quite correct, my dear friend," began the corporal, in a bantering tone, "and quite in the terms of the Billeting Act, which extends to all inns, livery stables, and houses of persons selling brandy, strong waters, cider and metheglin, whatever the devil that may be."

And then, laughing merrily, they rode straight into the stable-yard, where they unsaddled, stalled and

groomed their horses with soldierlike rapidity, and taking care to stand by while each had its feed of corn, for they knew too much of the world to trust to an ostler's nice sense of honour.

Then we repaired to the bar of the inn, where the entrance of a couple of dashing dragoons, in braided uniforms and high bearskin caps, with all their accoutrements rattling about them, created somewhat of a sensation.

The rosy-cheeked barmaid smiled with pleasure, the plump landlady curtsied twice, even the ungracious host pushed forward a couple of chairs—I was permitted to find one for myself—and several bumpkins took their long clay pipes from their mouths, and gazed with admiration, for the appearance of two scarlet coats in this peaceful quarter of Great Britain was quite an epoch in its history.

"Bustle, landlady, if you please," said the corporal, "and get us something to eat by way of supper."

"Supper for three," added the private, with a quick glance at me; "nay, no refusal, my lad," he added, interrupting some apology I was about to make, with an empty purse, an aching heart, and a burning cheek; "many a time I have known the pleasure of supping, yea, and dining too, at a friend's expense."

These dragoons were men who had an air, bearing, and tone far above their subordinate rank in the service, and there was a mystery about this that could not fail to interest me.

They were both bold and handsome fellows, with eyes that looked steadily at men, and saucily at women; slashing troopers, with long strides, huge spurs, and steel scabbards that made a terrible jingling.

The corporal pinched the landlady's chin, and then

gave the landlord a slap on the back which nearly made him swallow a foot-length of his clay pipe as they seated themselves.

"For shame!" said the barmaid, as our enterprising non-commissioned officer slipped an arm round her waist; "I fear you are a very bad fellow."

"I would rather be that than a *sad* fellow," said he; "but get us supper quick, my pretty one; we have had a long ride on a cold February day; but pray don't make a fuss, my dear—for me at least; I have long been used to take the world as it comes."

The landlord, who had not yet digested his mouthful of pipe, grumbled, as if to say that "private soldiers were not the kind of guests they were used to make a fuss about;" but he dared not speak aloud, for the aspect of his two unexpected visitors rather awed him, and the female portion of the household were all in their favour.

A piece of roasted beef, cold, some bread, and the materials for manufacturing whisky toddy, were rapidly laid for us within a snug recess that opened off the bar. A large fire which blazed within the wide arched fireplace, filled the whole apartment with a ruddy light, that was reflected from scores of plates in a rack, and rows of polished tin and pewter mugs and tankards; but I selected a seat that was in shadow, for Farmer Flail, who was seated in an arm-chair close by, and had wakened up at the noise of our entrance, had dozed off to sleep, and I had no wish to be recognised if he awoke again. Although I was scarcely a mile from the avenue of Netherwood, old Roger Flail was the only person in that district who knew me.

"The last time I was in this quarter, a strange affair happened," said the corporal.

"How?" I inquired.

"Our chaplain fought a duel."

"A duel—your chaplain?"

"Yes—with a cornet of Bland's Horse."

"About some point of scripture?"

"About a pretty girl, and the poor cornet was run through the body, and left dead, near the gate of a hall—Netherwood, I think 'tis called."

"Were you in the Greys, then?" I inquired.

"No—I was in the Dragoon Guards, and I had *not* the honour to be a corporal," he replied, while a dark expression stole over his handsome and sun-burnt face.

"Have you seen service?" I asked.

The troopers laughed.

"Seen service!" repeated the corporal; "I have seen everything—the devil himself, I believe; but we have both smelt powder in Flanders, and hope to do so soon again. Another slice of the beef, my boy? No more, you say? At your age, I could have eaten a horse behind the saddle."

I begged to be excused; I had but little appetite.

"I hope you can drink, at all events," said Tom Kirkton, the private, pushing the jug of hot water and the whisky bottle towards me; "make your brewage and be jolly while you may."

Then while stirring his steaming punch, in a full, deep, manly voice, he began to sing, while the corporal clanked his spurs and clinked his glass in tune to the favourite camp song of the day.

"How stands the glass around?
For shame, ye take no care, my boys!
How stands the glass around?
Let mirth and wine abound!
The trumpets sound,

And the colours flying are, my boys,
 To fight, kill, or wound;
 May we still be found,
 Content with our hard fare, my boys,
 On the cold ground!

“Why, soldiers, why
 Should we be melancholy, boys?
 Why, soldiers, why,
 Whose business 'tis to die?
 What, sighing?—fie!
 Shun fear, drink on, be jolly, boys!
 'Tis he, you, or I,
 Cold, hot, wet, or dry,
 We're always bound to follow, boys,
 And scorn to fly.

“'Tis but in vain
 (I mean not to upbraid you, boys),
 'Tis but in vain
 For soldiers to complain;
 Should next campaign
 Send us to HIM who made us, boys,
 We're free from pain;
 But should we remain,
 A bottle and kind landlady
 Cures all again.”

As he concluded, Kirkton kissed the hostess, and ordered another bottle.

“When I was in the Dragoon Guards, at the siege of Maestricht,” said the corporal, with something sad in his tone, “six of us sang that song one night in my tent; before the noon of next day, there was but one alive of all the six—myself—who could better have been spared.”

“You look downcast, my lad,” said Kirkton to me.

“Ay,” added the corporal; “what is the matter? have you done aught that is likely to make you seek a healthier atmosphere?”

“Don't jibe the poor fellow, Jack,” said the other, on perceiving a flush of annoyance cross my face.

“Is love at the bottom of it?”

"See how he reddens—of course it is."

"You mistake," said I, with a bitter sigh; "my funds are at *zero*."

"Is that all?" observed the corporal, laughing; "mine have been so many times, for Fortune is a fickle wench; but, egad! the dice-box, a little prize-money, a present from a pretty woman, or something else, always made the silver rise again to blood heat. Well—and so your purse is empty?"

"As you see—there is but a shilling in it."

"When mine was thus, I took another in the king's name, and then I had *two*—by that stroke I exactly doubled my fortune. What is your profession?"

"I have none."

"Relations?"

"Yes," I replied, flushing to the temples with anger.

"Friends, I should have said."

"None."

"Right!" exclaimed Corporal Charters, bitterly; "friends and relations are often very different people."

"Come," added Kirkton, "be one of us—you are just a lad after old Preston's heart."

"Old Preston—who is he?"

"Zounds, man! don't you know? He is Colonel of the Greys—our idol! we all love the old boy as if he was our father—and a father he is indeed to the whole regiment. Come, then, I say, be one of us—the lads who are second to none."

"*Second to none!*" echoed the corporal, draining his glass with enthusiasm, for this is yet the proud motto of his regiment; "you have still your brave heart, boy—the king will give you a sword, and you will ride with us against the French as a Scots Grey dragoon."

The fumes of the potent alcohol I was imbibing had already mounted to my head: the idea of becoming a soldier had frequently occurred to me, and these troopers had only anticipated a proposal I was about to make them.

"I will—I will!" I exclaimed, and gave each my hand upon the promise. Another jorum of punch was ordered, and long before it was finished, I found myself wearing the corporal's grenadier cap and aiguillettes, girded with his comrade's sword and belt, seated on the table, and singing most lustily, I know not what.

Then I thought of Ruth, and becoming sad related to them my love affair, at which they shocked me very much by laughing loudly, and for their own amusement made me describe her hair, eyes, hands and voice again and again, as I had drunk too deeply to perceive how they quizzed me. However, after a time, it seemed to me that they too became maudlin, as they rehearsed several of their tender experiences.

"There was a time," said the corporal, "when I too imagined I could love a girl for ever."

"For ever is a long time, Jack!"

"I still love with ardour——"

"For a day," suggested Kirkton; and then he added, with a tipsy air of sentimental sadness, "love sheds a halo over everything, and brings us nearer heaven."

"Indeed! By Jove, it nearly sent me the *other* way once, and almost brought me to a General Court Martial."

"Oh—you mean your scrape with——"

"The countess—yes—but silence on that matter, Tom," replied the corporal, whose face flushed, and he gave a bitter smile.

There was a pause, during which, though very tipsy, I surveyed him with interest, for every line of his face expressed stern loftiness, and then something of sadness and mortification.

"Well—well," said Kirkton, "drink and forget."

"No—no more for me; and you, Tom, have had quite enough."

"Bah! another glass—for sobriety, there is not my equal in the service—in the Greys most certainly——"

"How stands the glass around?
For shame, ye take no care, my boys!"

Of this night I remember no more, than falling asleep—I am ashamed to say—across the table, during Kirkton's song, completely overcome by what I had imbibed; and thus ended the first episode of my new career.

CHAPTER VI.

ENLISTMENT.

EARLY morning brought sobriety, with a headache, a burning thirst, and deep reflection.

I had enlisted as a private dragoon: I, the heir to a baronetcy; but it was a baronetcy that would not bring with it an acre of land, and by the enmity of its present possessors, I was then on the verge of total want. What other path was open to me than this, which it seemed as if the hand of destiny now indicated?

"Yes—yes," thought I, "it is the *dictum* of fate!"

My position had been one of extreme difficulty. I could not dig, and to beg—even from Sir Basil—I

was ashamed ; besides, I had a spirit that revolted at the idea of eating bread that was won either by falsehood or servility.

" 'Tis done !" said I, thinking aloud ; " in the plain red coat of a trooper, none will ever discover Basil Gauntlet—the disinherited heir of Netherwood !"

" So you are still resolved to be one of us ?" said Charters, when we met early in the morning.

" Yes."

" 'Tis well ; life is a lottery—let us go and draw," he observed, figuratively.

" I would rather go and drink," added Kirkton, who, after our late potations, looked rather red about the eyes.

" Try a dram—and then hey for the road ; but we must have our new comrade attested. Landlord, where is a justice of the peace to be found ?"

" Plague on them—they're thick as blackberries on both sides o' the Border," growled the host.

" For one, there is Nathan Wylie, the writer at——" began the hostess.

" No—no—I go not before *him* !" said I, with a pang of sorrow in my heart, as I thought of Ruth, whose sweet image came upbraidingly to my memory.

" Well — who next ?" asked the corporal, while buckling on his sword.

" Sir Basil Gauntlet, at the Hall—or his nephew, the young Laird that is to be."

" Worse still !" I exclaimed, passionately ; " I shall not go before them either."

" Zounds ! but you are hard to please," said Charters as he eyed me keenly, but with something of commiseration too. " What is your name ?"

" That I shall tell the magistrate," I replied, eva-

sively, not having yet thought of a *nom de guerre*. Then the corporal asked me—

“Is this Sir Basil a relation, a connection, or what?”

The landlord laughed while eyeing my scurvy appearance, as if he thought it very unlikely I could be either; my breast burned with suppressed mortification and rage, but I continued calmly—

“It matters little—I go not before him.”

“You are regularly enlisted, my lad,” said the corporal, soothingly, “and must go before some one.”

“Try the rector,” said I.

“We have no rectors in Scotland,” said the landlord, bluntly.

“Well, there is one over the Border, a few miles from this——”

“On the road to Rothbury—good,” said Charters.

“He is a justice of the peace, and such a one! Odsbud! he sent a child, four years old, to hard labour for having a tame pheasant for a pet.”

“How?”

“As a poacher,” added Boniface, with a rough malediction.

“Will *he* do?” asked the corporal.

“Yes,” said I, briefly; “and now let us begone.”

“Bravo! Now, Kirkton—brandy and water—boot and saddle, and let us be off. Our new comrade shall share our horses alternately, for we have nearly twenty miles to travel to-day before we reach head-quarters.”

As the troopers brought from the stable to the inn door their two stately grey chargers, in all the trappings of a heavy dragoon regiment, with saddle-cloth, scarlet valise, long holsters, powerful bits, and chain bridles, an old horse that was passing, heavily laden with the

wares of an itinerant basket-maker, pricked up his ears, and switched his short shorn tail, and seemed to eye us wistfully.

"That is an old trooper," said Kirkton ; "by Jove, the poor animal actually recognises our red coats, and, doubtless, his heart warms to the colour. Landlord, a feed of oats, and here is the money for it—a feed of oats for the old nag-tailed trooper. He has been a heavy dragoon horse—see here are the white spots where the carbine has galled him. Well, well ! it makes one sad to think that the dashing horse, which has perhaps borne a brave fellow in many a charge, which has fed from his hand, and slept beside him in the bivouac, comes down to the sand cart and knacker's yard at last !"

"After all, his rider's fate is seldom better in the end," said the corporal, "and I don't think either you or I, Tom, will have our tombs in Westminster Abbey. But bring the brandy ; confound care and reflection ; let us live while we can and be jolly, too !"

I rode each of their horses alternately after we crossed the border, as we proceeded southward, along the road towards the Rectory.

My comrades were rather silent now, and I was often left to my own reflections. The day was gloomy and lowering, and the wind came in gusts ; dark clouds rolled in masses across the grey, sullen sky ; the distant Cheviot hills looked brown and sombre ; but nature's aspect failed to impress me with gloom as on the preceding day.

I felt a glow of new enthusiasm kindling in my heart. The hopes inspired by ambition, pride, and all a boy's visions of military pomp and glory, grew strong within me. To wear a fine uniform—to ride a showy

horse—to be a captain in a year—to return to the village—to marry Ruth—and to flaunt my finery before the people, were my most prominent ideas. A year? Amid all this, I remembered that my dashing comrade, Jack Charters, spoke of having been a soldier for *ten* years, and was only a corporal still.

This was far from encouraging; but then I should be certain to prove so much more sober, steady, and industrious than Jack; and so I rode on scheming out my future career, with great brilliance and rapidity, and much to my own satisfaction.

I was full of such thoughts when we reached the gate of the Rectory, which was a quaint old building, having its deeply embayed and mullioned windows nearly hidden by luxuriant masses of ivy, vine and clematis. It was small, and covered simply with bright yellow thatch; but its walls were thick and strong, though they had often been subjected to fire by the invading Scots, in the stormy times of old.

We left the horses at the gothic porch, and, by a servant in livery, were ushered into the library, where the Rector was seated at luncheon, with a decanter of port before him, and he had been evidently dozing over his books and papers.

To attest recruits at once, without the many formalities of medical inspections and so forth, was common in those days, and for long after. Had it been otherwise, the public would never have been favoured with the memoirs of Phœbe Hassel, who served seven years in H.M. 5th Foot, or of Mrs. Christian Davis, another woman who served in all the battles of Marlborough, as a trooper in the Scots Greys, who had her head fractured by the splinter of a shell at Ramilies, and who enjoyed a pension of one shilling per diem till she

died, and was buried with military honours in the ground belonging to Chelsea Hospital.*

The Rector was a fine old gentleman, with a mild and rubicund visage ; and he had been, I knew, my father's early friend and schoolfellow ; so I resolved to enter the service under some such name as Smith or Brown instead of my own.

He started from his waking dream as the two dragoons clattered in. I can still see, in memory, that quaint old library in which he received us, with its dark oak shelves of goodly folios and quartos, in calf bindings, dark and brown ; some partial gleams of sunlight streaming through the lozenged window panes and carved stone mullions fell on the old man's shining head and scattered silver hairs—on the floor of polished oak, on the furniture of walnut wood, and on the russet tints that time had cast over everything.

"What bring you here, my friends—not a deserter—this boy?" stammered the Rector, with sadness and pity in his eye and tone, while wheeling his elbow chair half round.

"No, no, reverend sir, a recruit," replied Charters, with a military salute ; "a recruit whom we wish you to attest."

"That slender boy for the cavalry !" exclaimed the Rector.

"He will do excellently for the troop of light horse which Captain Lindsay of ours is raising," suggested Kirkton.

I was then slightly formed, and looked, I knew, wan, dejected, and poor. The good rector surveyed

* "Records of the Scots Greys," pp. 49-51. Phoebe Hassel was alive at Brighton in 1821. She served in the West Indies, and at Gibraltar.

me through his gold-rimmed spectacles with an unmistakeable expression of pity on his benign and fatherly face ; after a pause—

“ Have you considered this matter well ? ” he asked ; “ but you look weary, my poor lad ! take some wine—there are glasses on the buffet—corporal, help yourself.”

“ I thank your reverence,” said Charters, who never required a second invitation of this kind, and so filled our glasses with port—his own twice in succession, and drank, muttering, “ Good stuff this ! I’ve tasted worse—in a palace too.”

“ Have you weighed well the step you are about to take ? ” continued the rector, impressively.

“ Yes,” said I, firmly.

“ But your parents—— ” he urged, gently ; “ think of them.”

“ I have none,” said I, in tones that faltered as my heart swelled with emotion, and the old man shook his head sadly.

“ You will never be able to undergo the hardships of foreign service,” said he, shaking his head.

“ Then I will help to fill the trenches,” said I, with that spirit of bravado which we so often feel or assume in youth.

The corporal said something approvingly ; then the rector sighed, as he dipped a pen in an inkhorn, and placed on his desk a printed document, preparatory to filling up the blanks, or fifteen replies to questions always asked of a recruit at attestation.

“ What is your name ? ” he began.

Now it was that my heart failed me, and the question had to be repeated three times, as I could not tell an untruth.

"Do you hear me," he added, gently ; "your name ?"

"Basil Gauntlet."

He threw down the pen and half rose from his chair.

"The son of Major Gauntlet, of Granby's Dragoons ?"

"Yes," I replied, while both of the soldiers turned, and faced me inquiringly, and with unconcealed interest in their eyes.

"Oh, Basil," exclaimed the rector, who knew at once both me and my story, "this is sad, most sad. Consider, I pray you, consider well. I have some right to say this, for your father was one of my dearest and earliest friends."

"Sir, you know how *his* father has treated me ; thus, that which might have been dire necessity at first, has now become my choice. I am resolved to be a soldier, so I beg of you to hasten over this most mortifying scene, and let me begone."

In the irritation I felt at my position, I spoke somewhat sternly, even ungraciously, to this good man ; so Charters came to my aid, and urged that time pressed, so the formal oath was administered, which bound me "faithfully and honestly to defend his Majesty King George, his heirs and successors, in person, crown, and dignity, against all enemies, and to obey all the orders of his Majesty, his heirs and successors, and of the generals and officers set over me," &c.

This oath made me irrevocably a soldier.

The old rector shook my hand, and his voice faltered, for he felt more emotion than I did, as he accompanied us to the porch of his house, where he kindly bade us adieu.

"We shall have a most disastrous war ere long," said he, "and I may say in the words of Goldsmith, 'Go, my boy, and if you fall, though distant, exposed

and unwept for a time, by those who love you, the most precious tears are those with which Heaven bedews the unburied head of the soldier.' Farewell, my friends. God bless you !"

"We thank you, sir," replied Charters, with a profound salute, and with an air that had something lofty and noble in it, as he sprang on his horse and gathered up his reins ; "a good man's blessing can never be given in vain, especially to such reckless dogs as we are ; but, believe me, sir, that though but poor soldiers now, my comrades and I can never forget that we have been, and may again be, *gentlemen* !"

We were once more on the open highway. I was glad the scene was over, but I still seemed to see the mild and benevolent face of the old rector, and to hear his parting words.

"So we have really had the honour of enlisting the heir to a baronetcy?" said Kirkton. "You were right to come with us. I thought you were meant for better things than to be squire to a knight of the bluebag."

"What is that?"

"A lawyer. Were we quartered in Bath your story would make your fortune. Any heiress would marry you for the prospect of the title."

"That is flattering," said I ; and then thinking of Ruth, I added, "Why not for love?"

"Bah !" said Charters, "people don't marry for that, except in plays and novels."

"Jack, you are a misanthrope in spite of yourself," said Kirkton ; "but as this youth is the heir to a baronetcy——"

"I beg to have your promises of keeping the matter a secret when we reach the regiment?" said I, with great earnestness.

"Why?" asked they.

"Because I owe nothing to my family, and hate them as they hate me—the living at least. Whatever I may do to gain honour or promotion will never be acknowledged by my comrades, who will be certain to attribute success to the fortuitous circumstance of family and name."

"Egad! you are right, boy, and I love and respect your spirit," said Charters. "I have more than once seen a poor fellow gain the ill-will and malevolence of his comrades for being better born or better bred than those among whom his lot was cast, and thus bitterness came with prosperity."

"Your solemn pledge, then, that you will keep my secret?" said I, earnestly.

They promised, and I may add that the worthy fellows never betrayed it; but they too had each a secret, which they confided to me as we sat together over a glass of beer in a wayside tavern, a few miles from Rothbury.

"If I had not had the misfortune to have been born a genius, I should perhaps never have been a soldier," said Kirkton.

"A genius—you?" exclaimed the corporal, laughing.

"Sorry am I to say it, for 'tis the fate of geniuses to be restless and unfortunate. True; Boetus, who wrote on the battle of Philippi, died in prison; Plautus was a baker's drudge and turned a hand-mill; Terentius Publius was the slave of a Roman senator—. And I, Thomas Kirkton, am a private in the Scots Greys!"

"'Tis an ungrateful world, my friends," added the other, with an air of tragi-comedy that made us both laugh.

CHAPTER VII.

MY COMRADES.

TOM KIRKTON was the son of a thrifty and prudent Scottish clergyman, who had educated him for the Church, in the hope that he might be his assistant and successor ; but the wild life led by Tom when at college, a natural impetuosity of temper, a genius for everything but application—rash adventures and excitements—with stories of nights spent in gambling and carousing, and rumours of various *intrigues d'amour*, led to his formal expulsion by the Reverend Principal, and ultimately drove him into the ranks of the Scots Greys.

Time and experience had somewhat tempered the reckless tenor of his ways, and, though his boisterous manner was rather startling at times, I could not but deem myself fortunate in having a companion so well educated as he.

The story of Charters was indeed a singular one.

Five miles north-east of Dumfries there stands a tall, square, and ancient fortress called the castle of Amisfield, between the two head streams of the Lochar. For centuries this great tower had been the stronghold and residence of the Scoto-Norman family of Charters, of whom my comrade, the corporal, was the last representative.

In that tower he was born and reared, until he joined the army as an officer. At the age of eighteen he found himself a lieutenant in the 1st Dragoon Guards, and the inheritor of a splendid fortune, which he lavished in London with the reckless prodigality of a

Timon. He was at that time on leave of absence, seeking a transfer into a light dragoon regiment.

When rambling one night near Hyde-park Corner, he heard the cries of a lady whose carriage had been stopped by foot-pads. He hurried to her rescue, and narrowly escaped a pistol-shot ; but, closing with the fellow who fired it, struck him down, on which his companions fled, leaving Charters in possession of the field of battle.

The rescued lady proved to be a foreigner of very attractive face and figure, with bright blue eyes, and a profusion of fair hair, amid which, as well as on her neck and arms, many diamonds were sparkling. She was richly dressed, and was returning, apparently from a ball.

"You will permit me, madam, to escort you home?" said Charters, bowing, hat in hand.

She entreated that he would not give himself so much trouble.

"But, madam," urged Charters, "those fellows may return, and I cannot rest until I know that you are safe in your own residence."

"But which is your way, sir?"

"Your way is mine, madam—nay, I insist upon it. And with great gallantry he sprang up beside the servant on the footboard behind the carriage, and the lady, pleased, perhaps, to see that he was a handsome young man, made no further objection to his escort.

"Drive home," said she.

Pleased with the adventure, and considerably attracted by the personal charms of the lady, especially by her broken English, which had a child-like lisp in its sound, Charters slipped a handsome *douceur* into the hand of the footman as the carriage rumbled along,

and asked the name of his lady ; but the man proved to be a foreigner also, and replied in German, of which the questioner knew not a word.

“ Good !” said Charters ; “ the mystery increases.”

Indeed it grew greater still when the carriage, after traversing the Park by the bank of the Serpentine, drew up before the lighted portal of a large and handsome edifice of brick, having no less than three spacious quadrangles ornamented with columns, quoins, and elaborate cornices of stone. Charters immediately recognised Kensington Palace. Save the porch—near which stood two sentinels of the Foot Guards in their boxes—and one or two windows, the whole façade of the building was enveloped in darkness, for the king was absent, having gone on what proved to be his last visit to Hanover.

Charters assisted the fair unknown to alight, and led her to the door of the palace, with an air of confidence so perfect, that anyone might have supposed the house to be his own. Then she perceived that he wore the Windsor uniform, at that time the usual dress of all officers when on leave or on half-pay. Attracted, no doubt, by his air, which though gentle and soft to her, was proud, dashing, and careless, she paused upon the threshold to thank him for his ready courage and escort—then, after a little pretty hesitation, added, that she could not think of permitting him to retire without joining her at supper.

“ I cannot but accept, madam,” said he, kissing her right hand, from which she had coquettishly drawn the kid glove, as if perhaps, to show its beauty.

“ You have no fear ?” she whispered, with a soft side-glance in her clear blue eye, as she took his proffered arm.

"None, madam ; moreover, I am the foe of all restraint and prejudice."

"Then you should not have become a soldier."

"I can understand the restraints of the service, but I cannot abide the shallow and hackneyed usages of society."

It seemed to Charters that her little hand pressed his arm rather palpably at that moment, and she whispered—

"If seen here—if known——"

"By whom ?" asked Charters, hastily. "You have no husband, I hope ?"

"No—nor lover—none here, at least," replied the lady, laughing, as she threw off her white silk capuchin or hood, and then Charters saw quite enough of fair ringlets, and a neck and shoulders of great beauty and wondrous delicacy, to remove any scruples or fears which had occurred to him. He was in for an adventure now, and felt himself compelled to go through with it. A retreat was not to be thought of.

"By what name am I to have the honour of addressing you ?" asked Charters, in a half-whisper, as they sat down to supper, with the German valet in close attendance, and in a snug little room in that portion of the palace which had been built by the Lord Chancellor Finch. It was panelled and richly gilded, and from the walls one or two dark Holbeins looked grimly down upon their *tête-à-tête*. "Pray tell me, madam," he urged ; "for I am dying of curiosity."

"Call me Sophia," said the lady, looking down for a moment, and then bending her bright eyes on him smilingly ; "and you ?" she inquired.

"I am Lieutenant Charters, of the 1st Dragoon

Guards," replied the other. "Sophia?" he repeated in a soft, low voice, as he mentally ran over all the names of the female members of the royal family, for he concluded that his new friend must be a princess at least. Thus some very wild ideas began to float through his busy brain ; but at that moment he could remember no Sophia among all the ladies who were about the Court.

Amid all the rings that glittered on her hand—and a beautiful little hand it was—he could see no plain marriage hoop ; so his mind felt considerably relieved on that score. The valet in attendance wore the royal livery ; but an earl's coronet and the letter Y were on all the plate, and graven somewhat ostentatiously, too.

Though some years his senior, this lady, by the charm of her manner, her wit, and conversation, bewildered Charters so much, that in less than an hour he was desperately in love with her ; but she seemed resolved to preserve her incognita, and they separated, with an arrangement, however, to meet next day in Hyde Park, at an early hour, and before it was thronged by promenaders.

In short, they met frequently there, and oftener still in the green alleys of old Kensington Gardens—I mean that portion of them which was laid out by Wise, the gardener of Queen Anne ; and Charters' love for his unknown became a confirmed passion, so much so that he thought of visiting the Horse Guards—and withdrawing his application for a transfer to a light dragoon regiment, as he now anticipated with dread a separation from his captivating Sophia.

As she expressed a wish to visit the opera one night he begged permission to escort her there ; and on their

entrance all eyes were turned towards them. Her fine hair was dressed to perfection ; her bright eyes sparkled ; her soft cheek was flushed with pleasure and the richness of her dress and the splendour of her diamonds so enhanced her fair and remarkable beauty, that Charters was enchanted and felt proud of her.

Yet he could not conceal from himself that she was the object of more than common—and more than well-bred—interest. The ladies whispered to each other behind their fans, and some of the gentlemen looked at Sophia so boldly and so laughingly, that Charters felt inclined to teach them a rough lesson, if he could but fix upon one or two in particular.

They had seats next the royal box, which was empty, as the king was still absent, though expected to arrive at St. James's next day.

The opera over, Charters escorted Sophia to her carriage, and proposed to accompany her home, for he was resolved to remain in a state of suspense no longer. If her rank was so great that she concealed her name from him, why accompany him to the Opera, where she was certain of recognition ? The mystery was now greater than ever !

On attempting to step into her carriage, she said—

“ You must not—you cannot come with me—to-night at least.”

“ Why ? ” he asked, with surprise.

“ The king returns to-morrow from Hanover.”

“ The king ! ” repeated Charters, in a bewildered manner. “ What has he to do with the love I bear you—the love you have made me so happy by accepting ? ”

“ Alas ! I cannot tell you here ; but we must meet no more,” said she, sighing deeply.

The pressure of carriages compelled them to separate. Sophia sank back upon her cushioned seat, and covered her face with her handkerchief, as if she wept bitterly. The heart of Charters was filled with acute sorrow and vague alarm; but could he have seen her fair little face, he would have found it convulsed with—*laughter!*

“Hallo, Charters! so your fair one is gone?” said some one whose voice he recognised; and turning angrily, he found himself face to face with Frederick Shirley, a cornet of his own regiment. “A rare scrape you are in!” the cornet added, with a loud laugh.

“How so, sir?” asked Charters, sharply.

“What on earth tempted you to appear in an opera box with that woman?”

“*That* woman?” he repeated, fiercely; “what woman—who?”

“She who just left you in that absurd turn out—for it *is* absurd—horses, harness, and all,” continued the unabashed Shirley; “coronets, plating, and panels.”

“Who is she?” asked Charters, somewhat crest-fallen.

“What—is it possible that you do not know?” queried Shirley, with an air of utter bewilderment.

“I know that she is adorable, and is called Sophia——”

“Sophia Amelia de Walmoden, Countess of Yarmouth, and bosom friend of his majesty the king!” added Shirley, with another burst of laughter, as he took the arm of Charters and led him away.

Charters was stupefied!

He had been thus fooled by the mere mistress of this very unattractive king, some of whose “amorous sallies” in Hanover had excited *her* jealousy, and she was now anxious to revenge herself by exciting his in

turn ; for she was certain that the Defender of the Faith would hear of her appearance at the Opera with a handsome young cavalry officer. So Charters trembled with rage at the thought of his own folly, and began to school himself—however difficult and unpalatable the task—to hate her as much as he had formerly loved her.

Shirley's laughter galled him to the soul at first ; but afterwards, over their wine, he showed about a dozen of little pink and peagreen notes, which he had received from his faithless Walmoden, all signed "Sophia."

His appearance in public with the Countess of Yarmouth had given rise to much speculation and gossip in the vicinity of Kensington Palace, and St. James's too ; and Shirley was unwise enough to boast frequently of having seen the notes in the possession of Charters ; consequently, the latter soon found a secret influence at work against him at headquarters, and that there was little chance of obtaining either a transfer to another corps, or an extension of leave. This was unpleasant, as his funds were so much impaired by extravagance, that he could scarcely rejoin the Dragoon Guards.

While he was in this dilemma, Shirley called at his hotel one morning, and mentioned in confidence, that if he would give up Walmoden's letters, he would find, on looking at the *Gazette*, the position of his affairs materially altered.

Further information he stated himself to be unable, as yet, to afford ; so poor Charters, though not of a temper to be threatened even by the king, was scared by the thought of his creditors, and gave up the letters of the Countess to Shirley.

Impatiently he waited for the next *Gazette*; but on opening it, how great was his astonishment and rage to find the following notice :—

“ 1st Dragoon Guards. Cornet Frederick Shirley to be Lieutenant, *vice* Charters, *who resigns* !”

For some time he could scarcely believe his eyesight. Then he called for his horse and rode to the Horse Guards; but neither the Commander-in-Chief nor the military secretary would receive him, and for weeks he remained a prey to despair and mortification. He sought in vain for the perfidious Shirley, who kept sedulously out of his way, and had now left London.

“ My commission, the pride of my heart, was gone,” said Charters with a sigh, as he concluded his story; “ and by my own folly and extravagance, together with the active assistance of others, my fortune was nearly gone too. Friends disappeared as my purse emptied, and ere long I knew not what to do, or whither to turn me.

“ As for Shirley, my lieutenancy availed him but little, as he was dismissed from the service soon after for declining to *go out* with a brother officer. Gradually he became a gambler, a blackleg—in fact, a common robber in London, and his fate was a fearful one; so in my heart, I now forgive him.”

“ Was he executed ?” I inquired.

“ Worse. His brother, Sir Jasper Shirley, being out of town, at his place in Hants, the household plate was lodged, as usual, at his banker’s. It was valuable, for among it was a princely service he had received from the empress-queen when he was our Ambassador at Vienna; and when a sudden order came to the wary old butler, desiring him to get it all out, as Sir Jasper was returning to town, he showed the letter to

my ci-devant friend, Fred Shirley, who said 'it was all right, as his brother would be in London to-morrow'

"The butler, however, still had his secret fears; and after bringing home the plate, borrowed from a friend a bulldog—a surly and savage brute of great strength and ferocity, which he chained to the chest over night.

"Shortly before daybreak, a dreadful noise was heard in the apartment where the plate lay. Lights were procured—the butler and other servants hurried to the place, and found that a window had been forced by the usual implements of a housebreaker, who lay on the floor dead, but still warm, and in a pool of blood, for his throat and tongue were completely torn out by the fangs of the ferocious dog; and who think you he proved to be? Sir Jasper's younger brother—Frederick Shirley.

"So," added Charters, through his clenched teeth, "so perished he who betrayed me!

"Drinking, gambling, and reckless dissipation among the *condottieri* of London society, soon brought me like the prodigal of old to the husks and the swine trough; till one day, when my better angel triumphed over the evil spirit who had guided me so long, I conceived the idea of endeavouring to regain, by mere force of merit, the commission of which I had been so lawlessly deprived.

"Inspired by this resolution, so consistent with my warm and sanguine temperament, I enlisted in the Scots Greys; but my evil genius still follows me, for I have never got beyond the rank of corporal.

"I am not the man I once was, and may never rise higher. Perhaps I am too reckless, too much soured in temper, and too much of a misanthrope, to deserve

a commission, or it may be that the secret vengeance of the king and his devil of a Walmoden, still pursues me even here. I cannot see my future, but, happily,

“ ‘There is a Providence doth shape our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.’ ”

CHAPTER VIII.

HEAD-QUARTERS.

HAVING now related how I became a soldier, almost in desperation and misanthropy, I shall soon show how such emotions gave place to better, to braver, and to higher aspirations, fanned by that blessed *hope* which never dies in the heart of youth.

I learned—but not for a long time after this period—that when news of the step I had taken was brought by the sorrowing old Rector to Netherwood, it gave great satisfaction to my worthy grandfather, and still more to my affectionate cousin Tony, who drained a full bumper to the health of the Frenchman whose bullet should rid them of me for ever ; and then Sir Basil was actually barbarous enough to shake him by the hand and say—

“ Zounds ! Tony, my boy, you may be heir to my title as well as acres, and die a baronet yet ! ”

After travelling eighteen miles we reached Rothbury, a quaint old market town of Northumberland, pleasantly situated in a valley overlooked by a lofty ridge of rocks. Our head-quarters were here, but some of our troops were billeted at Bickerton, Caistron, and other townships of the parish.

The Coquet flowed through the town, and every

morning one of our first duties was to take our horses there to water, which was done by beat of kettledrum, for as yet the Greys, being Horse Grenadiers, had no brass trumpets.

On the morning after our arrival at Rothbury, I was brought before my commanding officer, Colonel George Preston. Tall, handsome, and venerable in aspect, he was a noble veteran officer, though somewhat of an eccentric character in his way. He was now far advanced in life, and had been from his boyhood in the Scots Greys, having entered the regiment as a kettledrummer in the last years of Queen Anne.

He was a captain at the battle of Val, where, at the head of only thirty Greys, he made so furious a charge upon a great body of French cavalry, that he routed and drove them fairly off the field. He then pulled out his purse, and gave each trooper a ducat with his left hand, for his *right* was so swollen by the vigorous use he had made of his broad sword, that the hilt had to be sawn in two by the regimental armourer before he could be released from it.

Under his old-fashioned scarlet uniform, which was cut somewhat in the mode of Queen Anne's days, he wore a *buff* coat, and this was, no doubt, the last appearance of such a garment in any European army.

He received me gravely but kindly, and said—

“So, boy, you have resolved to become a soldier?”

“Yes, noble sir,” said I; for, as Charters had informed me, this was then the mode of addressing the commanding officer of a regiment.

“You are very young, and seem somewhat different from the common run of our recruits. Your name is rather uncommon, too. I presume that your parents——”

strict obedience to orders. Put Basil Gauntlet into Captain Lindsay's troop ; attach the rest to Captain Cunningham's. The tailor and the rough rider will soon make dragoons of them all."

I was conducted to my billet. Fortunately it was in the same tavern where Kirkton and Charters were quartered, and with them I shared the first instalment of my pay, which at that time was small enough, when a cornet had but a half-crown per diem, and a lieutenant-colonel of Dragoons only eight shillings and sixpence !

My bounty-money was soon dissipated, for under pretence of fraternising with me, or teaching me many matters that might be useful, several of those rogues who are usually known in barracks as "old soldiers," or "knowing ones," stuck close to me and to the other recruits, so long as our cash lasted.

The next day saw me arrayed in full uniform. The largest mirror in the tavern (it measured only six inches each way) by no means afforded me sufficient scope for the admiration of my own person in this new attire ; though I could view it, when reflected at full length, in the shop-windows, while passing along the streets, into which I at once issued, as Kirkton said, "to exhibit my war-paint."

In those days—this was in the year before we fought at Minden—the Greys wore double-breasted scarlet coats, lined with blue, having slit sleeves ; long slashed pockets were in each skirt, and a white worsted aiguillette dangled from the right shoulder. We wore long jack-boots, and tall grenadier caps, with the Scottish Thistle and circle of St. Andrew in front.

Our cloaks were scarlet lined with blue shalloon, and in front they had rows of large flat buttons set two and two, on white frogs, or loops of braid. On

our collars we wore a grenade in memory that at its formation, a portion of the regiment had been armed with that formidable weapon, the same as the Scots Horse Grenadier Guards.

Everywhere the proud motto of the corps met my eye on the standards and kettledrums, on our caps, carbines, and pistol-barrels, and on the blades of our long straight broadswords, I read the words—

SECOND TO NONE !

That short sentence seemed full of haughty spirit ; it gave me a new life and fired my heart with lofty inspirations. I repeated it, dreamed and pondered over it, and as our departure for the seat of war was daily looked for, I longed for active service, and for the peril and adventure ever consequent thereto.

The brusque manners, rough words, oaths and expletives used by some of my comrades, certainly shocked and somewhat blunted my chivalry. To be sure all gentlemen then swore to their hearts content ; and I am sorry to say the army carried the fashion to an extreme, and there a quiet fellow was sure to be mocked and stigmatized as a methodist or quaker.

In all the many wars which succeeded its first formation, when it was raised by Sir Thomas Dalycell and Graham of Claverhouse, in 1678, to fight against the hapless covenanters, our regiment had borne a great and glorious part, at the battle of Drumclog and at Airsmoss where Richard Cameron the field preacher fell, the Greys were, unhappily, the terror of their own countrymen ; and even now, after the lapse of so many generations, traditions of those dark days still lingered in our ranks—handed orally down from veteran to recruit.

"They are in their graves. I have none to advise or regret me—none whom I can regret."

(Did no thought of poor Ruth arrest this sweeping speech?)

"Good! you are then the best of food for gunpowder. Your age——"

"I am about eighteen, sir."

"You look older than that—in face, especially."

"Sir, those who have undergone such years as I have, frequently do so."

In truth, I looked older than my age. My figure was tall, well formed and developed, while my face had a matured expression, and somewhat resolute aspect, especially about the eyes. Colonel Preston, though a stern man and a strict disciplinarian, felt a deep interest and pride in his regiment, and thus he narrowly examined every recruit before passing him into the ranks, and every man's name and character there were graven on his memory.

"I like both your spirit and bearing, boy," said he. "Sixty years ago, I was a poor and penniless lad, so I e'en became a private trooper in the Scots Greys, and behold me now! I am Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment, and hope, please God, to die a General, and go to my grave under a salute of cannon. Ere long, my lads," he continued to me, and several other recruits, who had just been ushered into the Orderly room, "we must all be in France or Germany, and there we shall find what the fortune of war has in store for us. Remember that the sword of a brave man is always sharp, but that of a coward for ever wants grinding! Stand by me, my lads, and I shall never fail you, and in me you see a living example of the reward that may await sobriety, steadiness, and a

In better times they had served in the wars of Anne and of the earlier Georges, and always with honour, for in every campaign they captured a colour, and at the battle of Ramilies surrounded and disarmed the French Regiment du Roi, capturing no less than *seventeen standards*.*

Our officers were all gentlemen of high spirit, who belonged to the best families in Scotland; and so attached were their men to them, that the corps seemed to be but one large family. Punishments—especially degradations—were almost unknown; yet “auld Geordie Buffcoat,” as they named Preston, was one of the most strict colonels in the service.

Every regiment has its own peculiar history and traditions, just as a family, a city or a nation have; these are inseparably connected with its own honour, achievements and badges, and with the military glory of the country, and thus inspire and foster the fine sentiment of *esprit du corps*.

But to resume :—

We marched southward by easy stages, and during the spring of the year were quartered at Newmarket, where the inns have ever been proverbial for the excellence of their stabling and other accommodation and where the race-ground and extensive heath were so admirably adapted for training the cavalry, who were all subjected to severe drill in anticipation of foreign service.

By this time I had gone from squad to squad, rapidly through all the phases which a recruit has to pass—position-drill and sitting up till my spinal column was erect as a pike; club-exercise to expand

* Fact: *vide* “Regimental Record.”

the chest and strengthen the muscles of the arm. Then came pacing and marching; then equitation, embracing all the skilful and ready aids by which to guide and control my horse in all his paces, and to acquire a firm seat in every variety of movement—to govern him also by my legs and bridle hand, so as to leave my right at the fullest liberty for the use of my weapons. Then I had the exercise of the latter to acquire—the sword, carbine, and pistol. Other hours were devoted to lance, post, and stick practice. Even a smattering of farriery was not omitted; so the first six months which followed my *début* as a Scots Grey left me little leisure for reflection, or for the study of ought else than would conduce to make me a perfect dragoon, skilled in all the science of destroying human life. I learned, moreover, that a *perfect* dragoon is not made in a day.

Colonel Preston daily superintended in person the training of his recruits; and the presence of the fine old man, with his mingled kindness and enthusiasm, kindled a kindred spirit even in the breast of the dullest fellow among us.

It seemed to me—but it might be fancy—that he took particular interest in myself, for he frequently spoke to me with such words of encouragement or praise, that my young heart swelled with gratitude; and I felt certain when the time came, that I would follow the brave old man, even to the cannon's mouth, with the devotion of a son, rather than the mere obedience of a soldier.

An anecdote of our veteran colonel, then current, related that when George II., who frequently displayed much favour and partiality for the Greys (notwithstanding his hatred of the Scots), was reviewing them

in Hyde Park one day before the Marshal Duke de Broglie and a prince of the House of Bourbon, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, he said—

“Monseigneur le Prince, did you ever see a finer regiment?”

“They are fine indeed,” replied the Prince, as the royal staff passed along the line; “but pardon me if I think them inferior to our Gendarmes de la Garde. Did your majesty ever see *them*?”

“No,” replied the king; “but I have little doubt that my Scots Greys have—eh, Colonel Preston?”

“Yes,” said the colonel, grimly, “we *have* seen them.”

“Where?” asked Louis Philippe.

“At Dettingen, when auld Jamie Campbell, who was killed at Fontenoy, led us to the charge against them.”

“Well—well,” said the king, impatiently, “and what followed?”

“We cut them to pieces, and there I took their *white standard*, cleaving the bearer down to the breeks; and the prince, if he chooses, may see it now, hanging in Westminster Hall.”

At Newmarket my chivalry received a severe shock, by being present at the execution of a Light Dragoon who was shot for desertion. He had been sentenced to three hundred lashes by a regimental court-martial. On this, he appealed to a general court, which, instead of confirming the former sentence, inflicted the penalty of—death!

It was long before I forgot the horrors of that scene; the grey light of the early morning—our pale faces on parade—the ominous silence—the almost whispered words of command—the pallid prisoner, as he knelt

beside his black deal coffin, and the shriek with which he fell within it as the death volley rang across the far extent of the open heath, and then the trumpet sounding to form open column and pass the poor corpse by files, announced that all was over.

CHAPTER IX.

MY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

I HAVE stated that I was placed in the troop of Captain Francis Lindsay, which for a time separated me from my friends, Charters and Kirkton. This was one of the nine troops of Light Horse, or Hussars, lately formed, one of which had been added to every regiment of heavy cavalry.

In a speech recently made in Parliament, his majesty observed "that the late success of his ally in Germany had given a happy turn to his affairs, which it would be necessary to improve."

The loyal Commons took the hint and liberally granted new supplies, both for the service of Frederick of Prussia, who was then at hostilities with the French monarch, and for enabling the army in Hanover to co-operate with him vigorously; and war having two years before been declared against France, an expedition—of which we were to form part,—was prepared for a descent upon the coast of that country.

We were detached from the regiment, and ordered from Maidenhead to Southsea Common, where we were encamped and brigaded with the light troops of other dragoon corps, for instruction in the Prussian exercise; and I may state without vanity that the light troop of the Greys in aspect, mount, and discip-

line, were allowed by those who saw them far to excel every other in the camp.*

Resolved to rise in the service by my own merit alone, I strained every energy to become master of my drill in all its principles and theory: The sword or foil was never out of my hand when I could find an antagonist; thus I became an expert swordsman, as well as an excellent horseman, and a decidedly good average shot with pistol or carbine. With either, I would put a bullet through a common playing card, when passing it on the ground at full gallop. This devotion to my profession, and my rapid progress, did not fail to recommend me to Captain Lindsay, a brave and high-spirited officer, to whom we were all devoted. He was a handsome fellow too, and generous as a prince—to use a common phrase—especially when on service, sharing whatever he possessed with his men.

It was while here under canvas, working hard, drilling, trenching and ditching, teaching myself and my horse—a noble grey, sixteen hands high, and a model of temper and courage—to swim when fully accoutred, that in a tavern near the camp, an old, tattered, and liquor-stained copy of the “*Weekly Journal*” one evening fell in my way. Books, periodicals, and papers were then almost unknown in camp and barracks, though the gallant General Wolfe had striven hard to encourage the formation of regi-

* “The *flower* of the Hussars is the troop commanded by Captain Lindsay, quartered at Maidenhead, where they have been practising the Prussian exercise, and for some days have been digging large trenches and leaping over them; also leaping high hedges with broad ditches on the other side. Their captain on Saturday last swam his horse over the Thames and back again, and the whole troop were yesterday to swim the river.”—*Weekly Journal*, May 23, 1758.

mental libraries, and since I had donned the red coat, I had neglected everything connected with literature, save a French grammar, of which during my scanty leisure hours, or when on guard, I laboured hard to make myself master.

While lingering over a pint of beer, I read every word of the "Journal," even to the obituary; and in the column of the latter, was a notice that gave me a shock, as if struck by a bullet.

It recorded the death of my grandfather four months ago by a sudden attack of gout in the head, caused, it was stated, by the grief he experienced on hearing that his well-beloved heir, Mr. Anthony Gauntlet, had been killed by a fall from his horse when riding furiously near Kirk Yetholm. "Thus," continued the paper, "the estates of Netherwood, worth thirty thousand per annum, pass to Mr. Anthony's only sister, the charming Miss Aurora Gauntlet, who becomes one of the richest heiresses on the Border, and thus disappears one of our oldest baronetcies, the first Sir John Gauntlet of that ilk, having been one of those, *infest* in lands in Canada with power of castle, pit and gallows, in the usual form, by the earth and stone of the castle hill of Edinburgh, and by the hand of Charles I., in person, in 1633."

"Disappears!" I muttered, through my clenched teeth. "True, the title disappears; but only for a time I trust."

I sat long buried in thought after this. Thirty thousand pounds per annum! That money by right was mine; this cousin, this Aurora, whom I had never known, never seen, and whom I hated in my heart as a fresh usurper, would doubtless be married by some one—a fortune-hunter, a needy adventurer

perhaps—and thus my patrimony would go to the enrichment of strangers, while I——

Thick and fast, fierce thoughts crowded upon me; I had little more than enough to pay for the poor glass of beer I had drunk, but I threw it on the table, and walked sullenly off without waiting for the change.

As I walked along the road, other emotions came over me—emotions that were prouder, better, more lofty and more soothing, for I saw the white tents of the camp—my new home—shining in the setting sun, as they dotted all Southsea Common.

I remembered the story of one whose fate was somewhat, if not exactly, similar—the poor Scottish baronet, Sir Robert Innes, who became a private in the foot regiment of Colonel Winram, of Liberton, and remained there long in obscurity, as private Robert Innes, till a former friend recognised him when on duty as sentinel one day before the quarters of the colonel.

On discovering that he was thus honoured by having a baronet to guard his door, Winram obtained Innes a commission, and gave him in marriage his only daughter and heiress, Margery. I thought I would strive to be like him, and until the lucky spoke of Fortune's wheel turned upmost, I would relinquish, save in my secret heart, all pride of birth or position of family, and the past, and forget too the important monosyllable, of which my unnatural grandfather had left nothing undone to deprive me. This was a brilliant bit of romance, no doubt, but unlike Winram, poor old Colonel Preston had no inheritance save his sword and his quaint uniform; and no beautiful daughter to bestow. I had no former friends to recognise me, and bring about a striking denouement, so I might be sentinel at his door for a hundred years be-

fore he could befriend me as Sir Robert Innes was befriended by Colonel Winram.

As a supplement to the notice I had seen, next day on parade the trumpet-major of the Light Horse, who usually acted as our postman, handed me a large thick letter. It bore the Berwick postmark, and was addressed in the familiar handwriting of Mr. Nathan Wylie.

My heart sprang to my lips, but I had only time to thrust the missive into one of my holsters, for the trumpets sounded to "fall in," and I was kept in an agony of suspense and anxiety to learn the contents—which seemed rather bulky—during the whole of a long and tedious morning parade, with its subsequent drill on the common.

What could this letter be about—what its contents? Money? It seemed too hard for bank-notes. Was it about Ruth?—poor little Ruth, whose soft image now rose so upbraidingly before me; for sooth to say, in the hurly-burly of camp and quarters, I had quite forgotten her.

The moment parade and drill were over, I rushed away to a quiet nook, and tore the packet open. It contained a letter from Nathan Wylie, short, dry, and professional, together with an old parchment, snuff-coloured by time.

It briefly stated that in his last will and testament, my respected grandfather had cut me off with the sum of one shilling sterling, which the writer herein inclosed, together with a document which he sent, doubtless as a taunt upon my private's uniform—the diploma of the Netherwood baronetcy.

CHAPTER X.

THE FRENCH DESERTERS.

LORD ANSON, Vice-Admiral of the Red, having put to sea with seventeen sail of the line (one of these was the hapless *Royal George*, which afterwards sunk in Portsmouth Harbour,) and several frigates, with some smaller craft, to block up Brest, and favour the descent to be made on the French coast, our expedition was prepared with great rapidity ; and Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, who had lately succeeded to the Dukedom of Marlborough, arrived in camp, to take command of the troops.

Our recent successes by land and sea—the territories and victories won by our armies in America, the East and West Indies—the almost daily processions through the streets of London, escorting Spanish treasure to the Tower or to the Mint, accompanied by the captured ensigns of French and Spanish admirals—gradually filled all Britain with a fiery enthusiasm, and fanned the passion of glory in the usually phlegmatic breast of John Bull to such a degree, that nothing now was talked of but war and conquest ; and the strange resolution was come to of carrying hostilities into the heart of France !

There were mustered on Southsea Common sixteen regiments of the line, nine troops of light horse (ours included), six thousand marines, and three companies of artillery, the whole under the Duke of Marlborough, with Lieutenant-Generals Lord George Sackville, and William, Earl of Ancrum, K.T., with four Major-Generals, Dury, Mostyn, Waldegrave, and Elliot, the

future Lord Heathfield, and "Hero of Gibraltar," who led the Light Horse, six hundred in number.

The noble harbour of Portsmouth, which is so deep and so sheltered by high land that the largest ships of the line may there ride out the roughest storm without touching the ground even at the lowest ebb of the tide, presented a scene of **unusual** bustle and preparation.

It was crowded by craft of every description—ships of the line, frigates, gun-brigs, tenders, store-ships, and transports; its waters being literally alive with man-of-war boats, barges, and launches, skimming to and fro, filled with seamen and marines, or laden with stores, water-casks, and ammunition, which were being conveyed from the town or arsenals to the fleet.

Twelve flat-bottomed boats, each capable of holding sixty-three men, were prepared. These were to be rowed by twelve oars each, and were not to draw more than two feet of water. Meanwhile a vast number of scaling ladders, sandbags to form batteries, baskets for fascines, waggons for the conveyance of wounded, of stores and plunder, had been brought to Portsmouth from the Tower.

Several launches and many bridges, each sixty yards in length, together with floats and stages, for landing the troops, horses, and horse artillery, were made in all haste.

Nothing was omitted that might ensure the success of this daring expedition, for which the departure of Lord Anson's fleet to Brest was certain to open the way, as we had long since swept the fleet of France from the seas; and so great was the enthusiasm in London, that Viscount Downe, Sir John Armytage, Sir James Lowther, and many other English gentle-

men of distinction joined the fleet and army to serve as private volunteers.

And there, amid that bustling scene in Portsmouth Harbour, lay the *Monarque*, on the quarter-deck of which the brave Admiral Byng had been judicially murdered, in the preceding year, not as his sentence had it, "for an error in judgment," but to cloak the errors of a ministry !

The infantry destined to serve on our expedition were three battalions of the Foot Guards ; the eighth, or king's regiment ; the famous Twentieth, or Kingsley's ; the Welsh Fusileers ; the Edinburgh regiment ; the Twenty-fourth ; Thirtieth ; Thirty-third ; Thirty-fourth ; Thirty-sixth ; Sixty-eighth, and the regiments of Richmond and Talbot.

From Southsea Common the whole force was ordered to the Isle of Wight, where for a short time a camp was formed ; but on the same night that the order for this movement was issued, I was despatched on duty to London, bearer of a letter from Commodore Howe to the Lords of the Admiralty.

I knew not what its contents were then, but departed on my mission with the document in my sabretasche, my orders being simply to deliver it at the Admiralty office, and to bring back the answer without a moment of delay. I shall now proceed to relate how I was personally concerned in the contents of the document entrusted to me for delivery.

From the day I joined the army, I was full of eagerness to bring myself prominently before my leaders ; but my first essay was singularly unfortunate in its sequel.

One evening, when on duty as sentry on foot with my carbine, posted near some sea-stores that were piled

on the beach, not far from Southsea Castle, I observed two men of a foreign and somewhat suspicious aspect, who were loitering near, and observing with unmistakeable interest the shipping in the harbour, the distant camp on the common, and the stores that were piled near the castle-gate. On perceiving that I observed them they came directly up to me, and touched their hats with great politeness.

"Mon camarade," said one, in very good French, "we are French sailors——"

"Then you have no business to be loitering here," said I, bluntly and hastily.

"Pardonnez-moi, camarade ; but we cannot help it."

"Then you are prisoners of war?"

"Nay——" stammered the other.

"What then?"

"Deserters," was the candid response.

"You are very rash to be here at such a time."

"We have escaped from the castle of St. Malo, where we were shamefully treated, and are anxious to offer our services and our knowledge of the coast."

"To us?"

"*Oui—mon brave*," said the fellow, with a grimace.

"Against your own country?"

"Sacre ! our country deserves nothing better at our hands," he continued, smiling and bowing.

My disgust was so strong that I felt tempted to club my carbine and knock the traitor down : but I restrained the emotion, and said—

"I am only a private dragoon, and can in no way assist you—so please to move off. It is contrary to orders for me to converse thus, and for you to loiter here."

"We are aware of that," said one, in a deep growl-

ing voice, who had not yet spoken ; “ but monsieur will perhaps direct us to whom we can apply.”

“ If you have been in the French Marine service, you should know that well enough yourself.”

I paused, and then thinking that though these men were traitors and rascals, their services or information might be valuable to the general and commodore, I said—

“ Messieurs, I may be able to assist you, when relieved from guard. What are your names ?”

“ Mine is Theophile Damien,” said the first speaker.

“ And mine Benoit Bossoit.”

“ We have both been seamen, and have served on board the privateer ship *le Maréchal Duc de Belleisle*, under the famous M. Thurot, in that battle off the Firth of Forth, with your two frigates, the *Solebay* and *Dolphin*, in May last.”

Next day, when relieved from guard, I met those men, by appointment, at a quiet tavern, where we had some wine, for which they paid liberally, seeming to be very well furnished (especially for deserters) with Louis d’ors ; and in the course of conversation I spoke freely—far too freely—of the number, strength, and probable objects of our expedition.

The name of one of these men—a tall, muscular, dark, and coarse-looking fellow, whose subdued manner belied his savage aspect—struck me as being singular.

“ You are named Damien, are you not ?” I said to him.

“ Theophile Damien—at monsieur’s service.”

“ It seems familiar to me.”

“ As to the most of Europe,” said he, bitterly, and he ground his strong white teeth as he spoke.

"What causes your hatred to your country--this disloyalty to your king?"

"Tudieu! have I not told you that we were slaves--galley slaves--and confined in St. Malo?"

(I find myself in honourable company, thought I.)

"Slaves without a crime," growled Bossoit.

"At least I had no crime," said the other, "save that I bore the hated name of Damien."

"What," I exclaimed, as a sudden light broke upon me; "are you a kinsman of--"

"Exactly, monsieur, of Robert Francis Damien, you would say--of that unfortunate peasant of Tieuloy, who, in January last year, stabbed King Louis just as he was stepping into his state-coach at Versailles, and so nearly rid France of a tyrant--yes, I am his brother."

"Was not this would-be regicide deranged?" said I, as fresh doubts of the value of such a pilot occurred to me, and I feared for my own honour, if found in company with Frenchmen of such a character, and especially at such a conjecture.

"His reason was wavering--poverty and the long wanderings of an unsettled life had made it so; but instead of confining him in a prison or fortress, he died of the most dreadful tortures," replied the first Frenchman.

"So I have heard."

"The king's wound was slight; but my brother was beaten to the earth by the sword hilt of Guillaume de Boisguiller, a captain of the French Guards, several of whom in the first transports of their zeal and fury, burned him severely with their torches, while he lay prostrate at their feet. A fortnight after this he was tried and tortured. Shall I tell you what followed?"

Tête Dieu ! my blood boils, and my heart sickens at the memory of it. After making the *amende honorable* in the Church of Notre Dame, he was conveyed to the Place De Grève, where vast multitudes were assembled ; where every window was filled with eager faces—and every housetop bore a living freight.

“The Provost of the merchants, the Echevins and other magistrates of Paris, in their robes, with all the great lords and ladies of the court, occupied the windows of the gloomy Maison aux Piliers, or Hotel de Ville, on the spire and pavilions of which banners waved as for a festival. In the square, beyond the scaffold and the troops who circled it, scarcely was there breathing space, so closely, so densely were the spectators massed ; but a silence like that of death hushed every tongue, for they knew that a scene of horror was about to ensue.”

The Frenchman paused ; the perspiration stood in bead-drops on his brow ; his face was deadly pale, and I could not fail to feel deeply interested, while thinking at the same time, that the language and bearing of himself and his companion were very different from what one might expect to find in a couple of runaway privateersmen.

“If, on that terrible day,” he resumed, “voices were heard, it was the murmur of those at a distance—those who were too far off to see—the thousands who crowded the narrow vistas of the Rue de la Tannerie, the Rue de la Mortellerie, the Rue du Mouton, and the Quai de la Grève, for all Paris had flocked to witness my brother’s execution.

“At five o’clock, just as the grey light of a dull March morning stole over the pale-faced multitude, the punishment began. My brother’s right hand was

half consumed by fire, and then struck off. Amid the agony, though his limb shrivelled and blood burst forth, *O mon Dieu !* the poor soul neither winced nor asked for mercy ; but when pincers, red hot and glowing, and ladles filled with boiling oil, molten lead and flaming resin, were applied to his arms, thighs, and breast, he uttered shrieks so piercing that every heart grew sick and every face grew pale. On his bones the very flesh was broiled, and his blood hissed in steam around him ! He was then disembowelled."

"Assuredly that must have put a period to his sufferings ?" said I, in a low voice.

"No—the principle of life was strong within him, for my poor brother was one of the most athletic of our peasants in Artois. These agonies—this butchery were insufficient to glut the rage of the courtiers and the fury of his judges. Four strong young horses were now harnessed to his four limbs, and lashed in opposite directions, but failed to sever his mangled frame, and he had now ceased to cry or moan."

"Failed, say you ?" I exclaimed, becoming more and more interested, in spite of myself, by the Frenchman's detail of this revolting execution.

"Yes—so the chief executioner, with a sharp knife, severed the sinews at the joints of the arms and thighs. Anew, the long whips were cracked—again the horses strained upon their traces, and a leg and arm were torn from the body of my brother, who looked—mother of mercy !—yes, *looked* after them, as they were dragged along the pavement, with the blood spirting from vein and artery ; but on the severance of the other two limbs, he expired.

"His remains were then cast into a fire, which was kept burning all day, and all the succeeding night."

"Were you present at this horrible scene?" I asked, after a pause.

"No—I was with Monsieur de Thurot, cruising off the coast of Scotland. On my return to France, I found my brother's family and name, even to the most remote degree, proscribed, and the cottage in which we were all born, at Tieuloy, in Artois, razed to its very foundations in token of infamy, and the place where it stood had been salted and sown with grass. On hearing of all this, some bitter words escaped me, so I was placed in the castle of St. Malo. There I made a vow to achieve both freedom and revenge. I have fulfilled the first part of that vow, and, *Dieu merci!* I am here."

A peculiar glance, the meaning of which at that time I could not understand, passed between the speaker and his companion; and as the story of the former seemed a strange one, I conducted them at once to Captain Lindsay of our troop.

He questioned them in a manner that displayed considerable contempt for the new character they wished to assume; and then sent them with a note to Commodore Howe, who at once accepted their services, and it was with a dispatch containing some real or pretended information they had given, that I was sent to London, on the evening when the troops began to move for the Isle of Wight; and I departed, happy in heart and high in spirit, furnished with an order to the constables of parishes and others, to furnish me with such relays of horses as I might require.

Four days' pay were given to me in advance; but as I left the camp, Captain Lindsay generously and kindly put a half-guinea in my hand, and desired me to "make myself comfortable, and for the honour of the corps, to avoid all scrapes and doubtful company by the way."

CHAPTER XI.

WANDSWORTH COMMON.

It was a lovely May evening when I left busy Portsmouth. The shadows of the tossing branches of the old limes and sycamores that bordered the wayside were cast far across the yellow corn ; the white and purple lilacs, the golden laburnum trees, and the tall hollyhocks with their gorgeous crimson flowers, made beautiful the gravelled avenues that led to many a villa and farm, while the fertile uplands that sloped in distance far away were half hidden in the warm haze of the summer sunset.

I felt proud of my showy uniform, proud of my beautiful grey charger, and proud of the mission on which I was departing, though in the humble capacity of an orderly dragoon ; and I was happy in the prospect of two days of perfect freedom from the routine and trammels of the camp, for a soldier, however young and enthusiastic, soon learns that he is no longer “the lord of his own proper person.”

My chain bridle and steel scabbard jangled in unison to the clank of my horse’s hoofs, as he trotted rapidly along the level highway, and in my young heart swelled anew all the pride of being a soldier, a horseman, and an *armed one*.

Within a week I should probably be treading the soil of hostile France, even as I was then treading the soil of peaceful and happy England. France ! might I ever return from thence ? Many of us were fated there to find our last home, and might I not be one of the doomed ? I thrust aside the thought—not that I feared death, I was too young and too hopeful for that.

but shrunk from the idea of perishing with the mass, before I had achieved what I conceived to be my mission ; before I had won myself a right to bear with honour the name my forefathers had bequeathed to me, and before I had resumed that title the diploma of which the miserable Nathan Wylie had sent in mockery to the private soldier !

Night came on and the road grew dark and lonely ; there was no light save that of the stars, which I saw reflected at times in the bosom of the Wye, and twelve tolled from the steeples of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, as I entered the quaint old market town of Guildford, and rode straight to the Red Lion, where I stabled my horse and ordered a relay for the morrow.

A forty miles' ride gave me a good appetite ; I supped and retired to bed, where I slept without a dream even of the future, for I was weary.

The next day was far advanced before I set forth again ; but I proceeded slower now, the hack furnished to me by the innkeeper proving very different in mettle from my fine grey charger. In short, the animal nearly broke down by the way, and though the distance between Guildford and the metropolis is only about thirty miles, evening closed in before I saw at a distance the vast and dusky dome of St. Paul's, rising in sombre grandeur from amid the yellow haze, formed by the smoke and by the myriad lights of London.

I had left behind me the little village of Wandsworth, which is finely situated on the declivities of two small hills, and was traversing the common, then a wild and open waste covered with grass, gorse, and tall waving weeds, through which the roadway passed. Clouds had now obscured the stars, and the night was so dark that I had some difficulty in tracing my path

though the accumulated glare of the innumerable street lamps and other lights of the vast city was very distinct but a few miles off, rendering the foreground darker.

When about the middle of the common, I heard the sharp report of a pistol and then the scream of a woman. These alarming sounds, and the flash of the explosion, came from the very path I had to traverse, so I spurred on my jaded hack, and found a carriage stopped on the common by two armed and mounted highwaymen, with crape masks on their faces. Such gentry were at that period still in the zenith of their perilous fame.

They had fired a shot to make the postillion pull up, and were now stationed one at each window of the carriage demanding the purses and other valuables of the travellers.

My holster pistols were at the demipique saddle of my troop horse, which I had left at Guildford; so drawing my sword, I rode boldly up and demanded what was the matter, and who fired the shot I had heard.

"You had better ride on and attend to your own affairs," replied a surly fellow, with a horrible oath, as he coolly reloaded his pistol.

"Surrender your weapon, rascal," I exclaimed resolutely, "or I shall cut you to the teeth!"

"Fire at him, Bill," cried he to his comrade. "Zounds! are we both to be cowed by a saucy shoulder-knot?"

On hearing this, his comrade urged his horse furiously round from the other side of the carriage. There I heard another female shriek as he levelled a bright barrelled blunderbuss, the bell-muzzle of which was so

near my face that the light flashed on it as he drew the trigger, for happily it only burned priming ; otherwise my head would have been blown to atoms, as on inspection afterwards I found this formidable firearm was loaded with slugs of lead and iron.

"Hung fire, by all that's infernal !" exclaimed the fellow ; but his exclamation of wrath ended in a howl of agony, when by a stroke of my sword I hewed off half of his right hand, and the weapon fell on the road, together with three of his fingers. On this they put spurs to their horses and galloped away at a break-neck pace.

With a shout of victory I pursued them for a few hundred yards across the common, and then returned at a canter to the carriage, the occupants of which proved to be two ladies, who, by their manner and difference of years, appeared to be mother and daughter. They had with them a waiting-maid, and it was she whose cries I had twice heard.

Their air was distinguished ; the younger was a very beautiful girl, with fair hair and a delicate complexion, but this was all I could discern by the light of a carriage lamp, which one of the footmen—a rascal who had hitherto hidden himself among some fern—now held within the window, while the ladies were putting on their rings, gloves, and bracelets, which they had drawn off to surrender at the moment I came so luckily to their rescue.

"Mamma, dear mamma, all danger is past. They are gone, and we are safe ; be assured, be satisfied," I heard the soft voice of the younger say imploringly to the elder, who was excessively agitated.

"Ladies," said I, touching my cap, "be composed now, I pray you ; those fellows have fled, and are not

likely to return. Fortunately, I have put a mark upon one that he will not easily efface."

"Sir," replied the elderly lady, in a voice still tremulous with alarm, "accept our deepest gratitude. To you we owe our rescue. Our money and jewels would have been a trifling loss, but how know we that these men might not have murdered us here on this lonely heath? and we hear of such dreadful things in these days."

"But was your servant here without pistols?"

"No, a pair of loaded horse-pistols are always in the rumble with John," replied the young lady.

"Why did you not use them, fellow?" said I, turning sharply to the valet.

He reddened and stammered something about the danger or rashness of one man encountering two, but his knees were trembling under him, and the hand which held the carriage lamp shook as if with palsy. In fact, he seemed so convulsed with fear that the young lady and I could not forbear laughing at him.

"When passing this way again, I shall take care to travel by daylight, or with a bolder escort than you, John Trot," said she; while the maid-servant, whose face I had not yet seen, as she sat in a dark corner, loudly and bitterly expressed her contempt for the unfortunate knight of the shoulder-knot, and for his lack of valour.

"We left the residence of a friend near Croydon about sunset, and should have been in London long since," observed her mother; "but a wheel came off at the cross road which leads to Kingston, and thus we were detained until this unpleasant hour. Have you sir, also, come from Croydon?"

"Nay, madam, I have just come from Portsmouth."

"Portsmouth!" echoed both ladies, with voices expressive of interest and animation.

"With despatches from Commodore Howe for the Lords of the Admiralty," said I, with an emotion of vanity difficult to repress, especially at my age then.

"Are you one of those who are bound for France?"

"Yes, madam."

"When does the fleet sail with the army?"

"Next week, 'tis said; but nothing definite has yet transpired," I replied, with all the air of a staff officer.

"Poor boy!" I heard her say, with something like a sigh, and with winning softness of tone, as the valiant John Trot asked if the carriage was to move on.

"As the night has become so dark, madam," said I, "you must allow me to have the honour of escorting you to town. You have still to pass Clapham Common, and its reputation for safety is somewhat indifferent. Even in Lambeth I have heard that robberies have been frequent of late."

"But how can we trespass so far upon your kindness, sir?" urged the young lady, whose voice made my heart beat faster.

"Believe me, madam, I deem it a great honour and happiness to have been of service to you, and for to-night, at least, your way shall be mine. I am pretty well mounted and very well armed."

"Fortunately, you are also proceeding to London," said her mother; "therefore I accept your polite offer with gratitude."

I bowed nearly to my horse's mane, and then said to the valet—

"Hand up that blunderbuss, John; it may serve as a trophy, and remind your lady of to-night's engagement on Wandsworth Common."

"And the three fingers—oh—ugh?" asked John, with chattering teeth.

"Those you may pocket, if you please," said I, while with drawing the charge, which, as I have said, proved to be slugs. I put the weapon in the rumble, and then the carriage was driven off.

As it rolled over the dark heath, I rode at a quick trot behind it; but frequently, when our pace became slower as we ascended a slope and the horses walked, the ladies conversed with me, and then I rode abreast of the open windows.

It was evident that by being muffled in my trooper's cloak, and having on a small foraging cap, I was taken for an officer; thus the elder lady gave me her card, and expressed, in the usual polite terms, the delight it would afford them to see me at their residence in some modish square (I failed to catch the name), if I had leisure to-morrow morning, as they had to leave town again at mid-day.

I felt piqued, and an emotion somewhat of bitterness and mortification stole into my heart; and while secretly cursing alike the rules of society and my own false position, I thanked her for the kind invitation, but without the least intention of availing myself of it. After this, I became a little reserved; but it was a difficult task to be so with the young lady, who was a lovely girl, and lively too. She conversed with me gaily, and asked if I longed for foreign service; if I thought the war would be protracted; if we were sure to beat the French; if I was not afraid—she begged pardon for such a silly question—of being shot in battle, and a hundred other pretty nothings; while her sweet face and sparkling eyes seemed to come out of the gloom of the travelling carriage and then to fade

into it again, as we passed an occasional dim street-lamp, all of which in those bygone days I need scarcely say were lighted by oil.

At the bridge of Westminster, which had been built about ten years before, I bade them adieu, and with something like a sigh of regret departed in search of some humble hostelry wherein to pass the night.

This brief meeting—the whole episode in all its details, interested me deeply. Those women so highly bred, so delicately nurtured, so richly dressed, so gentle and winning in manner, were so different from those whom I was now compelled to meet, in camp and barracks, at the canteen and sutler's tent, that for the first time my heart repined at the prospect before me.

"Pshaw!" said I, "let me think of this no more." But, near a lamp I reined up to examine the lady's card, and searched my pockets in vain. I had lost it!

"It matters little," thought I, "and yet, withal, I should like to have known their names." And amid the roar and bustle of the lighted streets of London, I still seemed to hear the merry laugh and gentle voice of the fair-haired girl whose hand I had so recently held in mine.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RACE.

ALL the adventures of the preceding night appeared but a dream, when early next morning—at least so early as I could hope to find any high officials at their office—I rode through the crowded streets of London, and delivered the despatch of Commodore Howe at the Admiralty.

"Immediate" being written on the envelope, I had to remain in a waiting-room for more than an hour ; after which the answer was entrusted to me, addressed, "On H. M. Service," to Commodore Howe. As I afterwards learned from the public prints, this document, among other instructions, empowered him to avail himself of "the services and information of the two French deserters named on the margin—Theophile Damien and Benoit Bossoit."

I consigned it to my sabretasche, remounted, and quitted London at a quick pace about two p.m.

On leaving the greater thoroughfares behind, when traversing the suburbs I easily lost my way, and at a tavern, near which a number of fellows in their shirt-sleeves were playing skittles, I drew up to inquire the way to Portsmouth.

I questioned one who was seated at the door smoking ; he was a man with a very sullen and forbidding expression of face, who had his left hand thrust into the breast of his vest. He wore a shabby snuff-coloured suit with large steel buttons ; his legs were incased in long riding-boots spotted with mud, and I perceived the brass butts of a pair of pistols peeping from his square flapped side pockets.

I was somewhat surprised when this sinister-looking stranger, after giving me a long and ferocious stare, started from his seat, uttered a deep imprecation, and entered the house. I then called to the skittle-players, and repeated my question to them.

On this they simultancously abandoned their game, and gathered about me.

"The Portsmouth road lies straight before you," said one ; "be you going to France, my lad ?"

On my replying in the affirmative, they gave a

simultaneous cheer, and, amid cries of "Old England for ever!" and "Down with the Johnny Crapauds!" I had to drink with them all, and they continued to wave their hats as long as I was in sight, while galloping along the road they had indicated.

Being anxious to reach Portsmouth and to rejoin, I rode at a hard trot; the road was good, the country open and level. Two mounted persons appeared at times behind me; but I continued to keep in advance of them. Some association of ideas made me think of the sulky fellow I had seen at the tavern door, and of the two highwaymen of the preceding night; but after a time I perceived that one of the riders was a lady, and that both were coming along at a rasping pace, as if determined not to be distanced and left behind by me.

I had taken the Epsom road, thus a ten miles' ride brought me to Ewell, near which, in a pleasant green lane, where the plum and apple trees that bordered the way intertwined their branches overhead—one of those quiet, dewy, and shady green lanes that are so peculiarly English, where the bees hum, and the gossamer webs are spun—I drew bridle to breathe my horse.

I now heard the sound of hoofs coming rapidly along the road, and in a minute after, there swept past me the fair traveller I had seen, and some yards behind her rode a man in livery. They were both admirably mounted on blood horses. Her ample skirt, her long fair hair, and the ostrich plume in her hat streamed behind her. I could see with a glance that she had her horse well in hand, though it flew almost at racing speed, causing mine to rear and strain upon the bit, as she passed me with a merry ringing laugh of delight, and with a flourish of her whip, as much as to say, "A. challenge—we have distanced you at last!"

This I was not slow in understanding, and feeling somewhat piqued, put spurs to my nag, and dashed off in pursuit by the highway that led to Epsom.

Twice I saw her looking back, which her valet, though a good horseman, scarcely dared to do; and each time she plied her little riding-switch with no very sparing hand, and like a girl of spirit.

Copsewood in full foliage, thatched cottages half buried among ivy, hops and flowers, ripe corn fields, and red brick houses, seemed to fly past, and in a very short space we found ourselves traversing Banstead Downs. I gained on them fast, for my horse had been thoroughly breathed. I soon passed the livery servant, and a few more bounds brought me neck and neck with his mistress, who turned to me laughingly, a flush—the genuine flush of youth, pleasure, and exercise glowing in her soft cheek—and simultaneously we pulled in our horses on recognising each other.

She was the charming blonde I had met on Wandsworth Common—the heroine of my last night's adventure.

My cavalry cloak was rolled and strapped to my saddlebow; and I thought there could be no mistaking my private's uniform now, and indeed, her countenance changed very perceptibly as she said, half breathlessly,

“Good morning, my friend. So I have actually been running away from the person to whose courage mamma and I owe so much?”

“It would almost seem so,” said I, bowing.

“Believe me, sir, I knew not that it was you,” she resumed, colouring deeply, and casting down her eyes (how fair her soft loveliness looked by day!). “I saw but a horseman before me, and could not resist the temptation of passing him.”

"Nor could I resist the desire of accepting your very palpable challenge," I replied, just as the valet came up, fearfully blown, and in his crimsoned face I recognised the features of the valiant Mr. John Trot.

"But I was not altogether trying a race with you," said the young lady, still blushing deeply, and beginning to move her horse away; "I was riding fast to overtake mamma, who is in yonder carriage. She is come to drink the waters of Ashted Spa, and I doubt not will be glad to tender you once again her thanks."

With these words, and with an air that seemed to say, "This interview, or this mistake, has lasted long enough," she bowed and urged her horse towards the carriage, which was standing about fifty paces distant on the high road, and from a window of which I saw a lady observing us.

The young girl's figure showed to perfection on horseback, and her riding-habit, which was of light green cloth, trimmed with narrow gold braid, suited well her blonde beauty and golden-coloured hair. She wore a broad black beaver hat, from which a single ostrich feather drooped gracefully on her left shoulder. Loosened by the roughness of the gallop, her soft hair flowed over her neck in silky ripples—I know no more fitting term—of light golden brown, that glittered in the sunshine. Her riding-gauntlets were of yellow leather, and her hands, as they grasped the reins and riding-switch, seemed small, compact, and beautifully formed.

"I thought we had lost you, madcap!" said her mamma, with annoyance in her tone and manner; "what caused you to gallop thus along the Downs, as if riding a race?"

"I was running something very like it, certainly

mamma ; but do you not see that we have been overtaken by—the—the gentleman who saved us from robbery last night ?”

“ I am hastening back to Portsmouth, madam,” said I, with a profound salute. “ In my ignorance of the country I have taken the road to Epsom instead of that which leads to Cobham, and to this mistake I owe the good fortune of meeting with you again.”

“ You had not time, probably, to visit us before leaving town this morning ?” said she.

“ I had the mischance, madam, to lose your card.”

At that moment, a man of sinister aspect and shabbily attired, but with holsters at his saddle, looked fixedly at us, as he rode slowly past, on a bald-faced bay horse.

His *left* hand was bound up by a red handkerchief, and, consequently, he held the reins of his bridle with the *right*. He glared at me with a glance of such undisguised ferocity, that I had not a doubt that he was the wounded rascal of last night’s adventure—the same man, he of the snuff-coloured suit and steel buttons, whom I had seen with the skittle-players in the suburbs of London.

Was he dogging me ?

If so, ’twere well to be prepared. All this flashed upon my mind with the usual rapidity of thought ; but I was too much interested by my new friends to attend to him then, and ere our interview was over he had disappeared upon the way to Guildford—the road *I was to pursue*.

“ Zounds ! I must look out,” thought I, “ or there may be a blauk in Lindsay’s muster-roll to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HANDKERCHIEF.

"It is indeed singular that we should meet again, and so soon, too!" said the elder lady, who, notwithstanding the silver tinge amid her auburn hair, still bore unmistakable traces of a beautiful person; "your regiment is, I think, a Horse Grenadier one?"

"Yes, madam."

"The Guards?"

"No—it is the Scots Greys, or Second Dragoons—yet we boast ourselves 'Second to None.'"

"A proud vaunt," said she, smiling at my manner.

She was silent for a few moments, during which I was conscious that her daughter was observing me with some interest. As our officers did not then wear epaulettes, but simply a silver aiguillette, her next observation was an awkward one for me.

"You are a captain, I hope?" said she, smiling.

"Nay—I am too young," I replied, with a hesitating manner and a glowing cheek.

"Yet Wolfe, whom I once knew, was a colonel at twenty. Then you are a cornet?"

I felt the blood rushing to my temples—yet wherefore should I have blushed "for honest poverty?"

"Curiosity is the privilege of our sex," said the young lady, coming to my rescue; "thus mamma is most anxious to know to whose bravery we owed our safety."

"Madam, I have not the honour to be more than a private trooper," said I, with a bearing of pride that had something stern in it.

Mamma did not lose her presence of mind, though

the colour in her daughter's cheeks grew deeper, but replied—

“Ah, indeed ! I believed you by your bearing to be an officer.” She drew her head within the carriage.

“I thank you, madam ; I was not always what I am to-day,” said I, sadly.

“And now, my good fellow, if you will favour me with your name, Colonel Preston shall be duly informed, by letter, of your courage.”

There was another pause, during which I shortened my reins, and was turning my horse, when the winning voice of her daughter, which had a singularly sweet chord in it, arrested me, as she said—

“You belong, you state, to the Greys?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know a soldier named Gauntlet—Basil Gauntlet?”

It was now *my* turn to feel confusion and extreme surprise.

“Yes ; but how has he the honour, the happiness, to be known to you ?” I inquired, with growing astonishment, while gazing into her clear, bright eyes.

“I have an interest—have we not *both* an interest in him, mamma ?” said she, with confusion.

“You—in a poor, unfriended trooper ?” I exclaimed.

“He is from our neighbourhood—that is all,” replied the young lady, with a hesitating manner.

I scanned her face in vain ; its soft expression and lovely features, her hair of golden-brown, her eyes of dark blue-grey—eyes full of faith, of truth and merriment withal—were quite unknown to me, and my heart beat quicker while my bewilderment increased, as she said—

"We have heard that this ill-starred lad has become wild, rakish, bad, incorrigible, and ugly."

"Ugly? Come, I am sorry you say so," said I, with something of pique.

"Why?" asked the mamma, raising her eyebrows and eyeglass.

"Gauntlet and I are alike as twin-brothers could be, and I don't like to hear him reviled."

"Ah, indeed!" said she, glancing at me leisurely through her eyeglass. Then, as thoughts of Jack Charters' countess, and the scrape *she* had lured him into, occurred to me, I resolved to become reserved; but could not help inquiring—

"Permit me, ladies, to ask how poor Gauntlet is so fortunate as to interest you?"

"We are namesakes—that is all," replied the elder lady, rather coldly.

"Namesakes!" echoed I; but at that moment, as the arms on the panel of the carriage door caught my eye—a shield *argent* charged with a gauntlet *gules*—a new light broke upon me. Anger—sudden, fierce, and glowing anger—was my next impulse, and, turning to the fair rider, I stammered, but my voice almost failed me, "You are—you are——"

"The granddaughter of Sir Basil Gauntlet, of Netherwood," said she, with haughty surprise.

I was silenced and confounded! This lovely girl, whom I had twice met so singularly and so abruptly, was my cousin Aurora, the new usurper of my patrimony—one whom I had schooled myself to hate and in my soul revile; and this elder lady, so noble, so courtly, and still so handsome, was the mother of my late fox-hunting cousin Tony—my aunt by marriage—she who doubtless believed me to be—if she ever

thought of me at all—the outcast, runaway, and worthless wretch my unnatural grandfather had sought to make me.

Pride and a just sense of indignation swelled up within me, and I sat on my horse, silent, irresolute, and stern. Aurora and her mother knew little of the stormy, the fierce conflict of nameless emotions that raged in my heart.

“Adieu, soldier,” said the mamma, “with a thousand thanks for the service so bravely and politely rendered. If you will not give us your name, at least do me the favour of accepting this,” she added, drawing forth her—*purse*.

I uttered a scornful laugh, and reining back my horse, said—

“Nay, nay, ladies, though impoverished and humbled, I cannot submit quietly to the degradation of being offered money.”

“This is most singular!”

“How is mamma to reward you?” asked the young lady, with something of surprise and, as I thought, pleasure in her tone. It might be that I flattered myself.

“By permitting you to give, and me to accept—” said I, taking a lace handkerchief from her hand, for I was always a lover of effect, and resolved to produce one now—“of this trifle as a remembrance——”

“Of what?” she asked, blushing to the temples; “a remembrance of what?”

“That Basil Gauntlet has been of some service to Aurora, the beautiful cousin who has done him a grievous wrong in unwittingly depriving him of his heritage and birthright. Three days, now, may find

me on the seas for France ; so adieu, aunt and cousin, adieu for evermore !”

Then I cut short this remarkable interview by spurring my horse with such energy that he made a wild bound and sprang away at a dashing pace along the road to Guildford.

Impulse had made me take Aurora’s handkerchief, and impulse now made me regret having done so.

Pride resumed its sway, and thus, while riding furiously along the road, I never turned once to look behind me.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE “RED LION” AT GUILDFORD.

As I rode on, anger, pride, a keen sense of the foul injustice with which my family had treated me, and of the false position in which they had placed me with the world, prompted me with a desire to cast Aurora’s handkerchief to the wind ; but the knowledge that she was an unwitting participator in the act by which my grandfather had transferred my heritage to her late brother, Tony ; the memory of her kind manner, the gentle expression of her eye ; together with certain high-flown ideas I had gathered from novels, tales of chivalry, and other romantic lore, prompted me to retain it. Edged with lace, it was of the finest cambric, and “Aurora,” marked by her own hand, no doubt appeared on one of its corners.

It was strange, but certainly not displeasing that she should think of and ask for me, whom she had never seen ; and the tones of her winning voice yet lingered in my ear. My mind soared into airy regions,

and became filled with tumultuous and undefined thoughts, for I was a famous architect of castles in the air.

"Ah, that I had the lamp of Aladdin, or even his ring, for ten minutes!" I exclaimed.

Aurora—who was well named so, with her pure complexion and golden hair—was the only living relative who had ever bestowed a thought upon me, so I placed the relic of her in my breast, and rode on, little foreseeing that on a future day that handkerchief would prove the means of saving my life.

On reaching Guildford, I repaired at once to the inn where, on entering the stable, I remember well how my noble grey welcomed me by neighing, by licking my hand, and rubbing his forehead against me, when I greeted him as an old friend.

In the next stall there was a bald-faced nag with eyes askance, surveying us over the trevice boards, and his aspect seemed familiar to me.

The "Red Lion" at Guildford was one of those huge, misshapen, queer old galleried houses which still survive the Tudor days in many parts of England. It had acute wooden gables, with stacks of clustered chimneys that started up in picturesque confusion. The walls were plastered and whitewashed, and had varnished beams of ancient oak, in some instances richly and grotesquely carved, placed in them horizontally, perpendicularly, and diagonally. On the side which faced the stable-yard there opened a triple row of bedroom galleries, having twisted balustrades; and all this quaint superstructure rose from an arcade composed of octagonal stone pillars and ponderous beams of good old English oak elaborately carved. Gigs, chaises, covered carts, and red four-wheeled

waggons, occupied the sheds around the yard ; and the sound of hoofs and the rattle of stall collars evinced that the stables were well filled.

When I arrived night was closing in, and a bright red light streamed cheerily through the windows of the bar into the outer darkness as I entered by the porch, which had a flight of steps down, instead of up to the door, for so old was the edifice that the soil had gradually accumulated far above its original basement.

I am thus particular in describing the house, in consequence of a startling incident which occurred during the few hours I sojourned there.

I inquired of the ostler to whom the bald-faced nag belonged, and he replied to a gentleman who had retired to bed, weary with a long journey.

The host of the "Red Lion" was so patriotic that he insisted upon having me to sup with him, and he would make no charge for my own or horse's entertainment. He drank deeply, and anon was soon borne away to bed by the ostler and waiter, while shouting vociferously, "Britons, strike home !" and "Down with the Johnny Crapauds !"

After this, I retired immediately, being anxious to reflect a little over the passages of the day, to sleep, and if possible to depart by daybreak.

As the waiter, candle in hand, was conducting me along one of the bedroom galleries, which I have described as overlooking the stable-yard, a dark figure appeared to hover at the farther end ; and there from amid the shadow a human face seemed to peer out as if observing us.

The hour was late, and the place in all its features strange to me. I stepped towards this eavesdropper, but he or she immediately disappeared.

If ghosts there were in Guildford, the upper regions of the quaint old tumble-down "Red Lion" seemed to be the very place in which one might take up its quarters, but other thoughts than of ghosts were in my head, so I inquired where the rider or proprietor of the bald-faced nag was located.

"In number six," replied the waiter.

"On this gallery?"

"Yes, sir."

"And mine?"

"Is number twelve—the oak room. His is at yonder end."

"'Twas there the figure disappeared."

"Figure? Well, there ain't no ghosts or ghostesses either in the 'Red Lion' that ever I heard of, and I have been here both man and boy these many years."

"How is this traveller dressed?" I continued.

"In brown broadcloth, I think, master."

"With a rusty old cocked hat?"

"Yes, bound with black galloon."

"Is his left hand wounded?"

"Don't know," replied the waiter, yawning, "for he keeps it always in his weskit poeket."

My suspicions now amounted to certainty. He was my acquaintance of Wandsworth Common—the highwayman, beyond a doubt. We were certainly in too close proximity, but the landlord of the inn was too tipsy to be referred to, and I had no desire to be detained upon the morrow, charged as I was with important papers for the commodore at Portsmouth; thus I made no more remarks, but took the candle, entered my room, and shut the door.

The apartment was entirely panelled with dark wainscot, hence its aspect was quaint and gloomy; the

furniture was uncomfortably antique, for this being one of the upper and cheaper lodgings of the "Red Lion," the whole appurtenances were the oldest in the house, having gradually retired from story to story, till their last service was to be spent in the attics.

The fireplace was wide, lined with blue Dutch tiles, and had a little old-fashioned basket grate, set upon square blocks of stone.

From the latticed window I could see the Wye winding under the bridge, the dark arches of which were clearly reflected in its starlit current beneath.

Two strong bolts secured my door, so there was no danger of being surprised by my friend in the snuff-coloured suit through that avenue. I threw off my belts and uniform, and slipped into a bed that felt cold, damp, and old, for the moths flew out of the russet-coloured canopy and hangings, to flutter about the candle end, the light of which expired just at the moment when I had no further use for it.

I felt feverish, wakeful, and full of many thoughts. Then there were strange sounds in this old house rather calculated to banish sleep; the night wind moaned in the wide chimneys; rats scampered about behind the decaying wainscot, scattering fragments of lime in their career. It might be fancy, but twice some one seemed to lift the latch of my door softly, as if attempting to open it.

Ere sleep began to weigh my eyelids down, I had mentally rehearsed over and over again the two unexpected interviews with my cousin Aurora; and again I repented having condescended to take her handkerchief even in a spirit of gallantry.

It was very cavalier-like no doubt—very romantic and all that; but in my heart I linked her and her

mother with those who had outraged and wronged me, and pride dictated that I should have left them in ignorance of who I was, and then have ridden off on my lonely way. However, now the deed was done, and regret was unavailing.

Would they—Aurora and her stately mother—triumph over the temporary, alas! it might be permanent, obscurity and humility of my position? There are human hearts wicked enough to feel such triumph, for many persons hate those whom they wrong; but Aurora's gentle voice and tone of sympathy when addressing me removed the supposition that she could be guilty of this.

I had met with so little kindness in the world that the circumstance of her remembering even my existence impressed me deeply.

These two interviews dwelt long in my memory. I was now excluded from the society of polished and educated women: indeed, from the force of that evil destiny to which I had been abandoned, I had hitherto seen little of either; thus the charm of my cousin's manner and the beauty of her person filled my heart with new aspirations, and a keener desire to assume my place in society; but at present the die was cast, and to France must I go as a private dragoon.

My half-drowsy ruminations had been frequently disturbed by sounds too strange to escape my observation. At last they impelled me to sit up in bed, to listen and to look around me.

The room was dark as a tomb, save where through the fantastic iron tracery of the antique window I could see the clouds, like masses of black crape, float past the twinkling stars.

On the wind, which came down the old chimney,

there were borne sounds like sobs and sighs—like fierce mutterings and groans that became deep, hollow, and agonizing; and they seemed to be emitted from the wall immediately above the fire-place.

My ears tingled and drops of perspiration started to my forehead, for I must confess that, at the moment, I was weak enough to fear the supernatural, until there came the decidedly earthly sound of a huge piece of plaster falling heavily into the empty grate.

After a time the noises entirely ceased and I was about to drop asleep, when a hoarse and despairing cry as of some one being strangled close to my bed, rang through the panelled chamber, and brought me again to a sitting position, with all my pulses quickened to the utmost by apprehension and the vague sense of sudden alarm.

“This can no longer be borne!” I exclaimed.

Starting from bed I drew my sword, and unbolting my door issued forth into the gallery which overlooked the stable-yard.

The night, or rather the morning-air, was mild and balmy; the wind had died away, and all was calm and still. I heard the clock of the Guildhall strike the hour of two. No other sound stirred the air; and as noises at that still hour are so deceptive—though there was something in that hoarse cry which impressed me with horror—a dread of ridicule, or of being the victim of some piece of wagery, prevented me from summoning the domestics of the inn; so once more I bolted the door, put my sword at the head of the bed, and therein ensconcing myself, soon fell sound asleep.

The next day was rather far advanced when I woke

up and started from bed, on instantly remembering that I must be gone without delay.

During a hasty breakfast I could not refrain from speaking to the landlord of the noises which had disturbed me so much in my chamber.

"Was the wind high or stormy last night?" I began.

"No; the weather was rather calm," said he, with his mouth full, for he was making a hearty, old fashioned breakfast of sliced beef, and nut-brown, home-brewed ale.

"Were any persons quarrelling or fighting here-about?"

"When?"

"Why, all night; till two in the morning, at least."

"I heard not a sound—the house was perfectly quiet." This statement the waiter, ostler, and landlady hastened to corroborate.

"Then," said I, "by Jove, your inn is haunted."

"Take care what you say, my good fellow," replied the landlord, becoming angry; "for lookee, my house has as good a reputation as any in the county of Surrey, so none of your tricks, soldier."

"Then the devil was in my chimney all last night, say what you will," I responded with equal if not greater irritation.

On hearing this the landlord's colour changed visibly. He went immediately to my room, accompanied by a servant, who soon returned making a great outcry, and stating that a man had been found wedged in the chimney, that by looking up with a lighted candle, his heels could be seen dangling some five feet or more above the mantelpiece.

On hearing these tidings, the whole household

became excited, and crowded to the apartment I had so lately quitted.

On looking up I could see, amid the obscurity of the chimney, the feet of a man, but they were beyond our reach. Workmen were soon procured ; the paneling was removed ; then the bricks were taken out, a breach made, and in something less than an hour, the dead body of a man was exhumed, all begrimed and covered with soot and lime.

He had evidently died of suffocation, having reached a portion of the chimney where he could neither descend farther nor work his way up again, and had there miserably perished ; being literally choked by the soot and lime, of which he had inhaled such quantities in his fruitless struggles and painful gaspings, that his foam-covered mouth and bloodshot eyes were quite filled with them.

His left hand was found to have been recently mutilated ; his right still grasped a sharp clasp knife, which was doubtless intended for *my* behoof, as an examination proved the body to be that of the traveller who had occupied No. 6, in the upper gallery—the figure I had detected, watching in the gloom, when retiring to rest.

As some housebreaking implements were found in his pocket, the landlord averred that he had been in search of a strong-box and plate-room ; but I had my own idea of his too probable errand, and thus the terrible sounds which had so long disturbed me, and that last hoarse cry of despair and death, were completely accounted for.

Fearing that I might be detained until a coroner's inquest had been held, concerning the death of this highwayman and would-be assassin, while all the inn

people, guests, and servants, were full of dismay by the discovery, I saddled my grey, and set forth for my destination at a spanking pace, which soon left Guildford far behind.

Before the evening gun had boomed from Southsea Castle I had reached Portsmouth, delivered my despatches and reported myself at head-quarters.

I was heartily welcomed by Charters and Kirkton, who had been sent by Colonel Preston to join Lindsay's light troop. I rejoiced at this, having sorely missed their society and companionship.

My few hours of freedom and romance—for there was something of romance in Aurora possessing my fortune, and I only her handkerchief—were now at an end, and again I was simply Basil Gauntlet the private dragoon.

CHAPTER XV.

SAIL FOR FRANCE.

By the last day of May, all the troops destined for the hostile expedition were embarked on board of the ships of war and transports. In all, there were thirteen thousand fighting men, with sixty pieces of cannon and fifty mortars.

The embarkation of our horses was an object of peculiar care, and General Elliot, with Captain Lindsay, of ours, superintended this duty in person—for on the manner in which it is performed depends all the chance of cavalry being employed with success in the field after landing.

They were conveyed on board the various ships, after a short march of exercise, and when perfectly

cool. On the first night after embarkation, each received a mash mixed with some nitre, and bran was supplied to every trooper, as the chief portion of his horse's daily ration.

Every day each dragoon had to wash with care the hoofs and fetlocks of his horse, and to sponge its face, eyes and nostrils with cold water. We had ample wind-sails rigged up for air, and spare slings and bands all ready in case of illness or accident; but, fortunately, neither occurred among the nags of our troop at least.

At daybreak, on the first of June, a gun from the commodore gave the signal *for sea*; and in less than ten minutes every vessel had her anchor apeak or atrip, and her head sails filled, and soon after, with nine hearty cheers, the whole armament, consisting of twenty-four ships of war, and one hundred and forty transports, cutters and tenders, stood out into the Channel, and a glorious sight they presented.

The *Essex*, a sixty-four gun-ship, commanded by our commodore, the Honourable Richard (afterwards Earl) Howe, led the van, and closely in her wake followed the *Brilliant* of thirty-six guns, commanded by Captain Hyde Parker, who was afterwards knighted for his services off the coast of America.

As the *Essex* bore across Sandown Bay, I have been told that the French deserter, Theophile Damien, assisted with his own hands to steer the ship, as if in token of the good service he meant to perform for us in future.

There was a pretty stiff breeze on this morning, and I had a dread of sea-sickness, as the vessel rolled heavily, her main deck being encumbered by stores; but the novelty of the scene and of the situation,

together with the activity of the seamen, as they swarmed up aloft and lay out upon the yards, occupied all my attention for a time ; and to our tars of after years, the Jacks of Anson and of Howe, in their little low cocked hats, Dutch-cut pea-jackets, petticoat trousers, and brass-buckled shoes, would present a very unusual spectacle. Certainly their costume was scarcely fitted for sending down the topgallant yards, or lying out on the man-rope to close-reef topsails in a gale of wind ; but they were true tars, nevertheless.

Ere long the breeze, which had favoured us so much that the shores of England had lessened astern, veered somewhat ahead ; the weather became stormy and wet, and I was glad to keep below, and share the stall of my horse ; while Kirkton, Charters, and others, who had been frequently at sea before, sat out upon the booms to leeward, and smoked to fill up the time.

In their mirth and cheerfulness, they formed a contrast to the unfortunate seasick troopers, who were all huddled away in groups, seeking shelter under the lee of anything that offered itself, and who remained there in discomfort and misery, till the drum beat for all but the watch to go below and turn in.

Next day I came on deck about dawn, and joined Charters, who was one of the morning watch ; and here I may mention, that when on board ship, troops are divided into three watches, and must take their share of all deck duty with the seamen. A subaltern officer has charge of each watch, and there are also, when the numbers embarked will permit it, a captain and subaltern of the day.

“ Gauntlet, my lad, you look pale,” said Charters, as he trod to and fro to keep himself warm ; for though the month was June, the air upon the morning sea was

cold, and the chill spray came flying in showers over the weather cat-heads, as the *Brilliant* sped upon her course, like all the fleet which covered the open channel, close hauled; "the morning watch is a devilish cold one, and we have no chance here of getting a hair of the dog—eh?" added my friend, laughing.

"What land is that?" I asked, with chattering teeth, while clutching the rigging with one hand, and pointing southward with the other.

"The land of France—that is Cape La Hogue," replied Charters.

"Ay," growled an old quartermaster; "yonder is the fort, with the flag flying."

The old tar's eyes must have been better than mine, which could discern neither fort nor flag; but I muffled my trooper's cloak about me, and set myself to watch the hostile shore.

The outline of the land looked dim and low, and like a dark cloud, as it rose from the grey morning sea, which was all of a dusky tint and flecked with masses of foam. The whole aspect of the fleet was gloomy and cheerless now; the decks and canvas were wet and dripping with the rain of the past night, and with the spray of the waves, for there was a heavy sea running in the Channel; but anon the sun began to rise through successive bars or streaks of purple and saffron cloud; then the long lines of waves rolled after each other glittering in light. The canvas aloft became whiter; the hulls of the vessels shone and became instinct with life, as the red port lids were triced up, the snowy hammocks placed in their nettings, and the scarlet coats crowded on the decks; drums and bugles were heard from time to time, warnings for parade,

orders or messing, as the swift fleet flew on at the rate of eight knots per hour; and now and then, by a signal from the commodore, the best sailers were ordered to cast a tow-line to the more slow, especially our deeply-laden storeships.

On the evening of the 3rd of June we came to anchor, between Sark and Jersey, for what reason I know not. In the night we had a hurricane; one transport lost a mast, another lost her bowsprit, and a third, crowded with foot soldiers, was totally lost by running foul of a sunken rock. The boats of the *Brilliant* were piped away with great celerity, and all the troops were saved before the wreck went to pieces; but I shall never forget that horrible night—the darkness of the atmosphere, the bellowing of the wind and the roaring of the sea, while the frigate leaped, plunged and strained on her cables, like a restive horse; and then, amid all this, the danger and excitement caused by the sinking of the transport amid the obscurity of that stormy midnight sea, and the loss of life that might have ensued but for the skill and bravery of our seamen.

Jersey is so surrounded by reefs of sunken rock, that it was a miracle no more of our armament perished on this occasion.

On the morning of the 5th, the commodore signalled to weigh anchor and pursue our course.

The whole fleet ran with a fair breeze along the coast of Normandy, and so close were we in shore, that the houses, farms, and even the inhabitants could be seen distinctly without the aid of glasses. At one place we saw a column of French Infantry on the march, with all their bayonets glittering in the sunshine; at another, where the land opened near Sainte

Soule, a regiment of dragoons riding at full gallop in the direction we were pursuing.

"Tom, we shall be under fire to-morrow," said Charters, thoughtfully, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe into the palm of his left hand and scattered them to leeward.

"All the better," replied Kirkton, "the see-saw of home service has sickened me."

"And me too," added I, "and I long for some keen excitement."

"Excitement," replied Charters, "then you are likely to have it with a vengeance, my boy! Think of thirteen thousand men invading France!"

By two o'clock p.m. we came to anchor in Canceille Bay, on the coast of Brittany, nine miles eastward of St. Malo. The *Brilliant* lay not far from the famous rock of Canceille, so celebrated for its oysters, the fishing of which forms one of the chief sources of local wealth.

Commodore Howe, it would appear, had now questioned narrowly the two French deserters, Theophile Damien and Benoît Bossoit, whom I had been the humble means of introducing to his notice, and discovering that they were profoundly ignorant of the whole locality, he began to suspect both their veracity and intentions, and therefore ordered them to be made close prisoners, while, accompanied by the Duke of Marlborough, Colonel Watson our quarter-master-general, and Thierry the pilot, he went in the *Grace*, an armed cutter, to reconnoitre the Bay.

The information of the two pretended deserters, as to the position and strength of batteries, and so forth, having proved perfectly erroneous, on his return the commodore ordered the Frenchmen to be searched; and then, on papers detailing the number and object of

our armament being found upon them both, he forthwith ordered them to be put to death in the most summary manner.

Posted as sentinel on the poop of the *Brilliant*, I was in ignorance of all this, and was treading to and fro carbine in hand, with my eyes fixed on the rough and wooded shore of Brittany, when Captain Lindsay came on deck, harnessed in full regimentals with sword and gorget on.

"Well, Gauntlet," said he, "your two Frenchmen have, unfortunately, proved to be impostors and spies, after all."

"Spies!" I reiterated, with some dismay.

"Yes; of the most dangerous kind."

"And what is to be done with them, sir?"

"That which the laws of war direct—ah! look yonder!"

He pointed to the *Essex*, the ship of the commodore, and a thrill of horror ran through me, on beholding two human forms run up simultaneously by the neck, to the arms of the foreyard, where they dangled for a minute in mid-air; but they were *not* meant to be hanged, as each had a cold thirty-two pound shot at his heels.

This must have been a pleasant spectacle for Thierry the pilot, who was also a Frenchman, and consequently a traitor.

A gun was fired from the bow of the *Essex*; solemnly the echoes of the sea and shore replied, and ere the last had died away, both culprits had vanished under the waves, whose ripples closed over them and left no trace behind. Then, as the pale and fierce dark face of Damien came in memory before me, I turned to my leader and said—

"Captain Lindsay, the fate of Damien forms a terrible sequel to the story of his brother."

"That story was falsehood—all," replied the captain; "he was no relation whatever of the famous would-be regicide, who was a peasant of Artois. The name of the spy was Theophile Hautois, not Damiens, and he never was a privatersman, nor served under Thurot, but was a forester of Brittany, and, as some suppose, a robber among the Menez Mountains. His whole narrative, so far as he was concerned, proves an artful forgery, and, like his companion, he was a fully accredited spy of the French authorities, employed to obtain information which his lips can never render them now."

The boom of a second cannon now pealed across the Bay.

"The commodore has fired another gun and hoisted a signal," said an officer close by.

The signal midshipman raised his telescope to the bunting which we saw fluttering at the mainmast-head of the *Essex*.

"What is it now—what says the order?" asked several, with the impatience and curiosity natural enough at such a time.

"All ships having flat-bottomed boats and landing-stages, *to hoist them out!*" replied the middy, with a kindling eye.

"Bravo," added Captain Lindsay; "that seems like work! Ere long we shall have to look to our spur-leathers and spatterdashcs."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LANDING AT CANCELLE.

It was very singular that though our armament had been visible off the coasts of Normandy and Brittany for four days, no preparations were made anywhere to oppose us. A strong French fleet lay in the harbour of Brest, but was there blocked up by the squadrons of Lord Anson and Sir E. Hawke, so it might as well have been in the Yellow Sea.

Just as the commodore's last signal concerning the boats was hoisted, two troops of French cavalry, and a regiment of infantry appeared on the heights above the Bay of Cancellé, where we saw their appointments and weapons glittering ; but after a time they fell back and disappeared inland.

The flat-bottomed boats were soon launched, and the grenadier companies of eleven regiments rendezvoused on board of them, around the *Essex*, the head-quarter ship.

The commodore now shifted his broad pennant on board the *Success*, a frigate of twenty-two guns, which got under weigh, and stood close inshore to silence a battery of only *three* guns which had begun to fire across the bay.

These were the first hostile shots I had heard ; and I must own that they caused my pulses to quicken, and created an undefined anxiety in my heart ; yet I had already stood fire, when so narrowly escaping Abraham Clod's gun on the roof of old Wylie's stable, and that adventure made me smile when I thought of it then.

Those three cannons—two 24's and one 12-pounder

—were all we had as yet to oppose, and they were in position at the landing-place of the fisher-town or village of Cancalle, which consisted of a group of picturesque little houses, situated at the base of a green hill that overhangs the sea.

The French cannoniers who handled them were brave fellows, for they killed several men on board the *Success*, nor were they silenced, and the beach swept of the inhabitants, till the commodore's ship, together with the *Rose*, *Flamborough*, and *Diligence*, opened their broadsides to the land, and filled the whole bay with smoke, making every rock and mountain echo to the reverberations of a cannonade that lasted till seven in the evening, for we had a dread of masked batteries among the shrubberies and hedgerows near the shore.

Under cover of this fire, the flat-bottomed boats, with three battalions of the Guards, and eleven grenadier companies of the Line, commanded by Lord George Sackville (son of Lionel, Duke of Dorset) and General Dury, rowed inwards, and landed on the beach in safety.

Those ships which contained the cavalry and artillery were now ordered to draw closer in shore. Our horses were slung over into the flat-bottomed boats alongside—each trooper, fully accoutred, standing in the wooden stall by his charger's head. It was about eleven at night before the light troop of the Greys, in four large flat barges, put off for the harbour, towards which we were slowly towed by the boats of the *Brilliant*.

The night was a lovely one. High sailed the moon in heaven, with clouds of fleecy whiteness flying past her silver disc. The beach and the blue sea were

light as if at noonday, and on the far expanse of yellow sand, in that secluded cove, where the aged oak and lime trees spread their summer foliage on the ripples—sand so soft, so smooth and golden that one could only think of nymphs or fairies disporting in fantastic dances there—we were disembarking Horse, Foot, and Artillery, with loaded arms and lighted matches, in all the grim array of war.

Slowly the huge boats, with their freight of Cavalry, crept inshore. Streaming from behind the dark mountains, the moonlight fell in long and tremulous lines of silver sheen, in which our weapons and the trappings of man and horse glittered gaily, and the whole scene was picturesque and impressive.

Each after each, the lights that whilome twinkled in the little town went out, as we supposed the people were taking to flight, and soon obscurity veiled it all, save where one or two tapers seemed to indicate a sick room, or a student's vigil—if, indeed, at such a time, one could be philosopher enough to study.

Our Foot, already formed in quarter distance columns, after their colours were uncased, their flints and priming inspected, were silent and still; thus, save the occasional neigh of our horses, as they snuffed the land, with necks outstretched and nostrils quivering, there was no sound along the bay, but the murmur of the rising tide, when it chafed on the steep Rock of Cancalle.

Beside me stood Jack Charters, tall, erect, and soldier like. One hand grasped his horse's bridle, the other rested in the steel basket hilt of his long broad sword. With a keen, bright eye, and a proud smile on his lip, he was looking at the shore, where—like myself—he hoped to regain by bravery and courage

the position he had lost by his own youthful folly and the injustice of others.

At last we were alongside the rough pier of Cancalle, and some of Kingsley's Grenadiers, who were ordered to assist in getting the Cavalry and Artillery disembarked, ran the landing stages on board for our horses. The first of ours, on *terra firma*, mounted, and sword in hand, was our gallant leader, Captain Frank Lindsay.

"Quick, my lads—get on shore and join the captain," said Charters, who, although a corporal now, could not forget the authority he had once wielded; "he is a man to stand by, for true it is that a good officer to lead makes a good soldier to follow."

"Ay, ay," added Kirkton, as he too, leaped joyously into his saddle, and made his horse curvet, while he sung :—

" 'Tis he, you, or I,
Cold, hot, wet, or dry,
We're always bound to *follow*, boys,
And scorn to fly."

"Fall in, my lads—fall in as you come ashore—and take up your dressing by the standard," cried Captain Lindsay.

A seaman, a good-natured fellow, was assisting me with my horse across the landing stage, when there was a whizzing sound, and a shot that came, no one knew from where, shattered his right elbow. He uttered a groan, and would have fallen between the boat and pier, had not Sergeant Duff, of the Greys, caught him in his arms.

"Never mind, mates," said he, cheerfully; "tie up the stump, some one—I'm in for a pension at Chatham Chest, boys!"

I remember that my first emotion was a selfish thankfulness that the shot had not struck *me*.

So strong was the ground by nature, in the neighbourhood of our landing, that two thousand determined men might have cut to pieces ten times their number from behind the thick hedgerows, the houses and the rocks; yet we encountered not the slightest opposition, save from the little battery already mentioned.

By the noon of the 6th of July, everything belonging to our small army—its whole material of war—was ashore, and we encamped on an eminence which was crowned by a picturesque old windmill.

It overlooked Cancellé, from whence the people—all hard-featured, ungainly, and squalid-looking Bretons—had now entirely fled, leaving their houses to the mercy of our soldiers and sailors, who pillaged them of everything they could find or destroy.

On the night of the 6th, with twenty other Scots Greys, I was detailed for out-picket; and under a Captain Wilmot Brook, of the 11th Light Dragoons, with twenty men of that regiment, all supplied with one meal of cooked food for ourselves and forage for our horses, we rode two miles to the front, on the road that leads from Cancellé to St. Malo. There the captain chose a position for his picket, and threw out a line of videttes, whose orders were to keep a sharp look-out, on peril of their lives; to fire their carbines on the approach of any armed party, but to permit all persons who came singly, bearing provisions for sale, to pass to their rear, without exacting a fee for their passage; to observe well the country in their front; and to communicate whatever they saw that seemed hostile or suspicious, by signal or otherwise, to **each**

other, and at once to the officer in command of the outpost.

These orders were rhymed rapidly over to me about nightfall, and I was left for a two hours' vigil in a gloomy hollow way between two hills, about eight hundred yards in front of the main body of the picket. This was my *first* responsible duty, and it so nearly ended in bringing me to a disgraceful and violent death, that the narration of that night's adventure deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VIDETTE.

To a young soldier few duties or situations are more trying than the post of advanced sentinel by night, in a strange place and foreign country, in time of war and danger—all the more so, perhaps, if the said soldier be a Scotsman, imbued with some of those superstitions which few of his countrymen are without.

"Keep your ears and eyes open, young man," said Captain Brook as he left me. "Remember that you are not now a sentry at the gate of a home-barrack, which no one thinks of attacking, but that you are an advanced vidette, on whose vigilance and acuteness depend the safety of the picket, the honour of the army, and hence, perhaps, of the nation itself."

"Does he deem me stupid, or what?" thought I, with some pique, as he rode off, accompanied by Sergeant Duff of ours, and I was left alone—alone to my own reflections.

The moon which shone so brightly last night was now hidden by masses of cloud, yet a few stray beams

lighted the landscape at a distance. In the immediate foreground, and around me, all was sunk in darkness and obscurity; but after my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I could make out the form of the two rugged eminences or hills which overhung my post, and the pathway that wound from thence into the defile between them.

Beyond that defile I could see the distant country, lighted at times, as I have said, by the fitful gleams of the moon.

All was still, and I heard only the champing of my horse upon his powerful military bit, as I sat with the butt of my carbine planted on my right thigh, gazing steadily at the darkened pass in my front.

The time passed slowly.

Twice I threw the reins across my left arm, and twice cocked and levelled my carbine, for on each occasion figures seemed to enter the pass, some on horseback and others on foot; but the next moment showed them to be only fashioned by my overheated fancy, out of the long weeds and nettles that waved to and fro on the night wind between me and the faint moonlight beyond.

On each of these occasions I made a narrow escape; to have fired my carbine would have drawn the whole line of pickets to the front, and brought the entire army under arms; but then to give a *false* alarm is a crime to be punished, though not quite so severely as to omit an alarm when necessary; so my position was sufficiently perplexing.

Silence, night, and loneliness induced reverie, and from the present and from the future, memory carried me back to the past—that period which possessed so little that was bright for me.

But a few months before, how little could I have imagined, or anticipated, that I should become a soldier and be situated as I was then—a lonely sentinel amid the mountains of Brittany! I thought with some growing repugnance of war, its cruelties and stern necessities—the precipitate execution of the two unfortunate spies, and the mangled corpses of the slain seamen, whom I had seen flung like lumber from the lower deck ports of the *Success*, after she engaged the battery in the Bay of Cancale, and a shudder came over me, for I was young to such work as this.

I thought of the green mountains of my native land—that lovely Border land, and its chain of hills that rise from sea to sea, between the sister kingdoms, with their fertile glens where herd and hirsel grazed in peace; where the brown eagle had his eyry in the grey rocks, and the black raven soared high in mid-air or came swooping down when the silvery salmon, or the spotted trout leaped up from the plashing linn—the land where every cairn and wood, tower and tree, had some wild or warlike legend of the past.

Old Netherwood, too, with the lazy rooks that cawed among its oaks, or roosted on the creaking vanes of its time-worn turrets. Then I turned away my thoughts in anger to the secluded Border village, where I had been so long a drudge, yea a very slave; but with the memory of old Nathan's inky desk, came a pleasant vision of the pretty little Ruth—Ruth whom I had well-nigh forgotten.

Was Ruth unmarried still? Did she ever think of me? I could almost laugh at my first love already, for to this heresy will the mind come at times, and in barracks I had reached it already.

And then Aurora—my gay and dashing cousin Aurora—the fair usurper of all that was mine, did she ever think of me, and our race on Banstead Downs? And so, soaring away into the realms of fancy, I forgot all about the pass in my front and the picket in my rear, till the sudden and confused explosion of some twenty carbines about a hundred yards distant, on my right, all flashing redly through the darkness, gave me a start, a shock, as if struck by lightning; and before I had time to think or act, there came the rush of many hoofs, and then a party of French Hussars, all fleetly mounted, swept past me from the *rear*, and fled towards the pass, pursued by our picket, which was led by Captain Brook in person! My horse reared wildly as they all passed me, and for about ten minutes I remained irresolute and ignorant what to do, until the captain with the main body of the picket all safe and untouched, but breathless and highly excited, came back at a hand gallop.

Now, for the first time, I discovered that during my luckless reverie a party of French light horse, commanded, it afterwards appeared, by the Chevalier de Boisguiller, an officer of dashing bravery, had crept past me at the distance of fifty yards or so, and unmolested and unchallenged, had actually ridden so close to Brook's picket, that they were first discovered by their sabres glittering in the light of the watchfire, near which the captain was seated.

Brook's face was crimson, and his voice hoarse with rage and passion when he accosted me, and in a minute more I found myself dismounted, disarmed, and standing a prisoner before him, a dragoon being on each side of me with his carbine loaded.

The captain was a handsome and soldierlike man,

somewhere about forty-five years of age, and the blue uniform of the 11th Light Dragoons, faced and lapelled with buff to the waist, and richly laced with gold, became him well. His features, though naturally of a grave and mild cast, were now stern, and his eyes sparkled with anger. I could see all this by the light of a torch, held by one of the 11th, and I could perceive also that my comrades of the Greys regarded me with aught but pleasant faces, as I had involved the honour of the corps by my negligence.

"So—so—s'death, you are a fine fellow to act as a vidette!" began the captain, with scorn and wrath in his tone; "thanks to you, we have had an alert with a vengeance! You are now aware, that while asleep you have permitted a body of the enemy's cavalry to pass your post—a body which, if strong enough, would have cut this picket to pieces."

"Under favour, sir, I was not asleep," said I, firmly.

"Zounds, sirrah, it matters little! But do you know what the 'Articles of War' say concerning conduct such as yours?"

I was silent.

"Shall I tell you?" asked the captain, earnestly, and in a lower tone.

"If you please."

"They state that any officer or soldier who shall shamefully abandon any fortress, *post or guard*, committed to his charge, or who shall be found sleeping on his post, whether upon the land or the sea, shall suffer DEATH, or such other punishment as a court martial may award."

I was so completely stunned by all this as to be incapable of speech; but Duff of ours, a kind and grey-haired old sergeant, said—

"Captain Brook, the lad is a good lad, and a steady one; we have few better in the Greys."

"Then I am very sorry for the Greys!"

"I do hope, sir," continued the sergeant, "that his life, at least, may not be forfeited?"

"My life!" I exclaimed, mechanically.

"Yes, that may be forfeited, and I disgraced!" said Captain Brook, bitterly. "I have commanded many a post, but never one that was surprised before. Tomorrow I shall hand you over to the guard of the provost marshal. What is your name, fellow?"

"Basil Gauntlet."

On hearing this, he started and became so visibly affected, that the soldiers of the picket who crowded around us holding their horses by the bridle, glanced at each other with inquiry and surprise. Brook surveyed me keenly for a moment, and then a sorrowful frown seemed to deepen on his features.

"Was your father ever in the service?" he asked, abruptly.

"He was an officer of Granby's Dragoons."

Then a malignant light sparkled in the eyes of Captain Brook, and he struck his spurred heel into the turf.

"Was my father your friend?" I asked, with hesitation.

"Friend!" he reiterated, bitterly; "no—no—not my friend. But your mother, what of her?" he added, in an altered voice.

"She is in her grave," I replied, with faltering accent; "else, perhaps, I had not stood before you thus to night, a private soldier and a prisoner."

After a pause—

"My God!" said Brook, in a low voice, as he took off his helmet and passed a hand across his flushed

brow. Then seeming to recollect himself, he said, "Fall back, sergeant; and fall back, men—picket your horses, and lie down if you please till daybreak, when the outpickets are called in. Leave the prisoner with me. Gauntlet," he continued, after we were somewhat alone, "step with me this way. I shall do all in my power to serve you, and to be your friend."

"Sir, you astonish me," I exclaimed; "how am I so fortunate?"

"I will tell you a secret, boy—a secret long buried in my heart," he continued, in a voice that grew soft and kind; "your father and I were rivals—rivals for the love of the same girl—long, long years ago; but he was the successful wooer—I the discarded one! She was your mother, boy; and now, for her sacred memory, and the memory, too, of that early love, which brightened for a time the first days of my soldiering, I will save you, my poor lad, if I can. Nay more, I have some interest at head-quarters, and will serve you as if you had been my own son, and this will I do for *her* sake."

The voice of Captain Brook trembled, and I bowed low, for I could not speak.

"You know what the rules of the service prescribe," he resumed, "in such a case as yours?"

"You have already told me, sir."

"Death?"

"Yes."

"Yet you shall not die, and your future promotion shall be my peculiar care. Comrades," cried he to the men of the picket, "in Basil Gauntlet I have discovered the son of an early and dear friend. He is but a young soldier—a mere boy, and I would save him if I can."

‘ You may command us, sir,” said Sergeant Duff.

“ We will do anything for you, Captain Brook,” added the men of the 11th, with enthusiasm.

“ I do not mean to report his dereliction of duty—so give me your words that *you* will be silent in the matter.”

“ We swear it, sir !” they exclaimed, with energy ; and that honest pledge was never broken.

“ Now, Basil Gauntlet,” said Captain Brook, as he gave me back my sword, and grasped my hand, while speaking rapidly and energetically, “ you, doubtless, have your father’s courage and spirit of honour. These are hereditary, and old Sir Basil could not *will them away* as he did the acres of Netherwood, the family pictures, and the silver spoons. Be a man, and a brave one, as your father was—I knew him well and hated him—God rest him now, for all that ! Tomorrow, I shall see that you are taken out of the ranks ; for to-night, I can but share with you the contents of my canteen.”

An aide-de camp now came galloping from Cancellé to inquire the meaning of the firing. Some explanation, I know not what, was made, and so ended this remarkable episode, which had a gloomy sequel on the morrow, when all the bright future which the sudden friendship of Captain Brook had opened to me, was rapidly overcast.

About noon the poor man was killed by a shot from a French sharpshooter, as we were advancing through a thick wood. Dr. Lancelot Probe of ours was speedily at hand, but my new friend was gone for ever, and I was one of those who assisted to wrap his remains in a horse-rug, and to inter them by the wayside, as we marched towards St. Malo.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HALT AT ST. SERVAND.

DURING the 7th of June the whole force (save one regiment, which was left at Cancalle to cover our re-embarkation, if necessary) marched towards St. Malo, through a rough and woody country. A dense mist from the ocean enveloped the scenery for some miles inland, and through this we were advancing when Captain Brook was killed. The soil seemed barren, with black sheep grazing among the rocks and boulders; old and ruinous bridges lay across deep swamps and rugged watercourses, that rushed towards the sea. Without molestation we passed several quaint old manor houses, girdled by weedy fosses and moss-grown oaks—and some whose embattled *porte cocher* and grated casements opened to long and shady avenues of sycamore trees.

Ere long, we came to more open parts of the country, covered with pink heath and spotted with yellow flowers; in others, with fields, snow white with the bloom of buckwheat. In these flat places rose here and there, exactly as in Scotland, great battle stones of the Druids or the Celtic Britons, that stood grim grey, erect, solemn and silent; and so a march of nine miles through scenery such as this brought us in sight of St. Malo.

The men of our troop were so much occupied in scouring the district through which the infantry advanced, covering both flanks, reconnoitring and so forth, that it was not until sunset when our small army encamped at the village of St. Servand, two miles from St. Malo, that I had an opportunity of

relating to my two chief friends, Tom Kirkton and Jack Charters, the strange adventure of the preceding night.

They listened to me with astonishment, as we sat by the foot of a large tree under which our horses were stabled (if I may use such a term), and where we were regaling ourselves with ration biscuits and the contents of a gallon keg of French wine, of which Charters had become proprietor on the march.

Around us the whole force, horse, foot, and artillery, were busy cooking or preparing for the bivouac of the night. Countless little fires, lighted beside trees, hedges, and low walls, glared and reddened in the evening wind, and when the dusk set in, they shed a wavering gleam on the piles of arms that stood in long ranks, on the white bell-tents and the red-coated groups that loitered near. The whole scene was picturesque, lively, and striking, and in the distance lay the town and fortress of St. Malo, quaint and worn by time and the misty storms that came from the open sea.

Its harbour is one of the best seaports in France, but is extremely difficult of access. The town is small, gloomy, and dull, but populous and wealthy, and crowns a rock which the sea encompasses twice daily—thus St. Malo is alternately insular and peninsular, as the tide ebbs, flows, and churns in foam against its fetid rocks, whereon the russet-brown seaweed rots in the sunshine; and far around it lies a barrier of sharp white reefs, the foe of many a ship ere beacons were invented.

It was guarded by a strong castle, flanked by great towers, on the battlements of which the last light of the setting sun yet lingered with a fiery gleam. The

town had usually a good garrison ; but His Grace the Duke of Marlborough had now learned that there were not quite five hundred troops in the whole of this neglected province of Brittany, which, though forming a portion of the kingdom of France, had long been under its hereditary dukes, and was now governed by a States-General, with provincial privileges of its own.*

For ages so separate had its interests been from those of France, that James III. of Scotland was requested by Charles VIII. to send thither a body of troops to capture and annex Brittany to his northern kingdom ; but the Scottish parliament declined to sanction the subjugation of a free people ; so this strange scheme was abandoned.

A strong wall surrounded St. Malo, and every night twelve dogs of great size and ferocity were led round it by a soldier of the city watch, that their barking might give notice if brigands or an enemy approached.

The last ray of sunlight soon faded upward from the cathedral spire of St. Vincent, and the shades of twilight were already casting into obscurity the rocky basement of the whole city and its weedy reefs amid the chafing sea, when in a lonely part of our camp by St. Servand my two comrades and I reclined on the turf beside our accoutred horses, and drank the contents of the wine-keg, using one horn—for we possessed but one—fraternally by turns.

"It is very true," continued Charters, with reference to my adventure of the preceding night ; "egad, friend Gauntlet, you had a narrow escape ! In other

* It continued so until the Revolution in 1792.

hands—particularly those of old Preston—you had assuredly been brought to the drumhead and had a volley of ten carbines for dereliction of duty. To fall asleep on one's post before an enemy——”

“But I was *not* asleep,” I persisted.

“Well, well ; but to let the enemy pass you——”

“I was thinking of other times, Jack.”

“Very likely,” said Kirkton ; “on such a lonely duty, and at such a time, by night, I have too often found the thoughts of other times, and images of those I have loved or lost, who are dead, or far, far away, all come unbidden before me.”

“It is unwise to look back regretfully—for the past can never come again. Oh, never more !” continued Charters, sadly, as he thought of some cherished episode of his own life ; “so the wiser and the manlier way is to improve the *present* (pass the keg, Tom), and look boldly at the future.”

“You are right, Jack,” said I, as this military philosopher proceeded to light his pipe and groom his horse, which he carefully covered with his cloak ; “but I fear it will be long before I can school myself into your cool way of taking things. I have seen but little of the world, Jack, and have only learned to enjoy life since embracing the profession which sets no value upon it.”

“Time and travel will improve your views, my boy ; and ‘all travel,’ says Dr. Johnson, ‘has its advantages ; if it lead a man to a better country, he learns to improve his own ; if to a worse, to enjoy it.’ I have travelled much in my time—steady, old horse. steady!—and as I did so with sundry rounds of ball cartridge at my back, I have learned much that Dr. Johnson never thought of.”

"In what way, Jack—to handle a dice-box and make love to the barmaids?" asked Tom.

"I have learned more than that," retorted Charters somewhat coldly; "travel taught me to be charitable; for one finds good people everywhere, abroad as well as at home, for as it takes a great many men to make an army, so many people are required to make a nation."

"Bah!" shouted Tom Kirkton, who was in his shirt-sleeves and attending to our cooking; "we have had enough of musty moralising. This is like one of old father's sermons, poor man! and a sermon sounds oddly in your mouth, Jack. Here is a rasher of bacon, broiled on a ramrod and done to a turn. Come here while it is hot and savoury, for we may say with the fool in the Scripture, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

"Boot and saddle! To horse, you fellows there!" cried the loud and authoritative voice of a staff officer as a strange sequel to Tom's ominous speech. He proved to be General Elliot, who was passing through our bivouac at a hand gallop, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, both plumed and aiguilletted. "To horse—the Light Dragoons!"

"Fall in—the Scots Greys!" added Captain Lindsay, coming up at a trot; "we are ordered to the front."

"So Tom's dainty rasher was eaten in a trice; the last of Charter's wine was drained, the keg tossed into the nearest watch fire, we sprang on our horses, and at the first ruffle on the kettle-drum formed line on the left of our standard.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SACK OF ST. SOLIDORE.

LIKE all who are so subordinate in rank, we fell in and formed, in total ignorance of where we were going, or what we were to do ; who we were to attack, or by whom we might be attacked ; and, perhaps, not caring much about the matter, provided we were to do something.

In the dusk the roll was called ; the troop " proved " and formed in column with the other light troops under Elliot, the future " Cock of the Rock." We loaded our carbines and pistols, and then the order was given—

"Threes right—forward—trot !" and away we went.

Though we had been imbibing only French wine, we three comrades were not in a very reputable condition ; but, fortunately, this could not be perceived in the twilight ; though Charters was unusually lively, and my skill was frequently tested, as I was generally the flanker of a squadron, being completely master of my horse.

In the leading section of three, there was a gigantic trooper before us, named Hob Elliot.

"By Jove, Hob, what a noble pair of shoulders you have !" said Charters, as we trotted on ; " what a mark your back will be for our friends the French !"

"If they ever *see* it," growled the Borderer, for he was a Liddesdale man.

"Bravo, Gauntlet," hiccupped Charters, then turning to me ; " head up, and thumb on the bridle—you have quite the air of a soldier !"

"I always study to *be* what I wish to seem," said I

"So said Socrates," added Tom Kirkton, remembering his classics.

"Ugh! he quotes Socrates on the line of march."

"Well," rejoined Tom; "he was a private soldier like ourselves, and saved the life of Xenophon."

"Be silent, my lads," said Captain Lindsay; "we have work in hand that requires you to be so."

As we quitted our bivouac, I was more than ever struck with its picturesque aspect. Some regiments of infantry (among them the 8th, 20th, and 25th), which had not yet been ordered under arms, were lying around their watchfires in a green clover field. These fires could not have been less than ninety or a hundred in number, and their united glare fell redly on the sunburned faces and scarlet uniforms of the scattered groups who sat around them; on the lines of those who lay asleep with their knapsacks for pillows; on the long rows of muskets, piled with bayonets fixed, and on the silk colours that drooped before the guarded tent of each commanding officer.

Beyond these were the dark figures of the active artillery, limbering up, tracing their horses to the field guns, and preparing for immediate service; and as fresh fuel was cast on those watchfires, and the weird light flared up anew, it brought out in strong relief objects at a greater distance; trees and rocks were visible for a time, and then, as the flame wavered and sunk, they faded into obscurity. Add to all this, that the night was intensely dark, and the atmosphere dense and sulphury.

Nor moon nor star were visible; the wind was still, and the flames of the crackling watchfires burned steadily and high.

"Where are we going—what are we to be about?"

we now inquired of each other as we rode on ; and ere long, from mouth to mouth, as the staff officers, perhaps, unwisely informed those commanding troops, and these, in turn their subs, we learned that the Duke of Marlborough had, during the day, reconnoitred the harbour and suburbs of St. Malo, with the shipping and government stores, and had resolved on their destruction ; so we were now to cover the advance of a body of infantry and artillery who were to perform this duty, with shot, shell, and hand grenades.

While advancing, I overheard Captain Lindsay say to Cornet Keith of ours—

“Marlborough has heard that the youngest and favourite daughter of the Marshal de Broglie, who now commands in Germany, resides in a chateau near St. Malo ; and he thinks she would prove an important capture.”

“Nay—pshaw—zounds, gallantry forbid !” responded the cornet, who was carrying the standard.

“I heard him say he would give a hundred and fifty guineas for her,” continued Lindsay.

“For what purpose ?” asked Keith, laughing.

“To send to London as a trophy, like the brass guns we hope to take at Cherbourg.”

“A sorry capture, unless the girl is beautiful.”

After proceeding about half a mile, our troop was ordered to press forward to the front, while the others reined up ; then, as the artillery halted, and the deep hollow rumbling of the wheels and shot-laden tumbrils ceased, we could hear the flowing tide chafing in the dark on the bluff rocks of St. Malo, and, ere long, we saw the red lights that twinkled in its streets and fortress which towered above the ocean.

Girt as it was by deep waves and lofty walls, “the

city of the corsairs," as some one names it, was secure from us then ; so we rode on till we reached an open space, when the order came to form line on the leading section, and then the whizz, whizz, whizzing of balls, together with the rapid flashing of carbines in front, announced that the foe was before us.

My temples throbbed ; there was a wild glow in my heart, and then an emotion of terror, as a bullet struck me fairly in the centre of the breast, above my pouch belt. For an instant I thought it was through me, and breathlessly dropped my reins ; then, instinctively, I placed my hand within my coat, and expecting to find it covered with blood, drew forth—what ? Aurora's handkerchief. It had saved me from the ball, which pierced my coat, though half spent.

I pressed it to my parched lips in gratitude ; and perfume was lingering about it still. I had scarcely replaced it and recovered my equanimity, when I heard the clear, firm voice of Captain Lindsay, as he rode to the front, with young Keith by his side, carrying the standard advanced.

"Cavalry are before us, and we must clear the way. March—trot ! keep your horses well in hand—press on by leg and spur !"

We advanced, with drawn swords, the troop riding on, boot to boot, and thigh to thigh—moving like a living wall. Then rapidly followed the words—

"Gallop—*charge !*" mingling with the sharp blast of the trumpet, and totally ignorant of what was amid the darkness in our front, whether a column of cavalry, a yawning chasm, or a stone rampart, we rushed blindly and furiously on with a loud and ringing cheer.

We charged with tremendous force, and in the heat,

hurry, and confusion of such a moment, performed at racing speed, I sat in my saddle and guided my horse with a combined coolness and steadiness that certainly resulted from mere instinct or force of habit, rather than reason. I felt as in a dream, till suddenly, out of the darkness in front, there came before me a line of horses' heads, with another line of human faces, and uplifted swords above them. Then there was a wild crash, as if the earth had opened, when horse and man went tumbling under us, as we swept over the enemy, cutting and treading them down.

"*Tuè ! Tuè !*" cried they ; "St. Malo for Brittany !" But their provincial patron availed them not.

They proved to be a mere handful of hussars, led by the Chevalier de Boisguiller, who was nearly killed by the sword of Charters ; but escaped by having an iron calotte cap within his fur cap. We lost only three men in this charge ; but found nine of the enemy lying dead on the ground next day.

In vain the Chevalier, an officer of the most romantic courage, endeavoured to rally his men.

"*En avant, mes camarades—Mes enfans, en avant !*" we heard him shout, while brandishing his sabre ; "*Voilà—voilà, c'est la voye à l'honneur, à la gloire, à la victoire ! Vive le Roi !*"

As they fled there was no pursuit, for the trumpet sounded to recal stragglers.

Then we re-formed line and wheeled back, to permit the infantry and artillery to pass to the front. After this, our orders were simply to guard and patrol the approaches to St. Solidore, against which our comrades on foot commenced the most active operations.

I have no intention of detailing the whole of these, nor could I do so, perhaps, if willing ; but never shall

I forget the splendour of the terrible scene which ensued, when the fires of destruction spread along the suburbs of St. Solidore and St. Servand, and all around the harbour of St. Malo.

Through the dark sky we saw the shells fired by our artillery describing long arcs of light, and bursting like fiery stars or flaming comets among the rigging of the ships in the basin, or on the roofs of the stores and houses on the quay. Then the shrieks and cries of the fugitive people came towards us through the still night air, together with the incessant explosion of the hand grenades, which our grenadiers, as they advanced alongside the ships, threw point blank on their decks, and down the open hatchways.

The most deadly missiles were the *anchor balls*, fired by our artillery.

These were filled with powder, saltpetre, sulphur, resin, and turpentine, and had an iron bar, one half of which was within and the other outside the shell. The latter half was armed with a grappling-hook, which caught the rigging of the ships, or the walls or roofs of houses, as the heaviest end flew foremost, and by these chiefly the whole place was soon sheeted with flaming pyramids, amid which we saw walls crumbling and descending, and masts and yards disappearing amid mountains of sparks and burning brands, while torrents of red fire poured from every door and window round the whole circle of the harbour.

The sky was full of red clouds and sheets of red sparks; the harbour and the bay beyond were all ruddied, as if changed to port wine, and the whole air became filled with roaring flame.

High over all this towered St. Malo on its rock, and on its embattled walls, its gothic spires and storm-

beaten cliffs, redly fell the glare of destruction ; while at times we heard the barking of the watch-dogs, and could see the gleam of arms along the ramparts, for every citizen was in harness, and from mouth to mouth went the cry—

“ St. Malo for Brittany ! the women to their homes, and the men to their muskets ! ”

But, though they knew it not, we had no idea then of assailing a place so strong by art and nature.

The naval storehouses, full of sails, ropes, tar, pitch, oil, paint and powder, blazed the whole night, exhibiting every variety of prismatic colours, but ere morning, ships, houses, and magazines were all confounded in one mass of charred and blackened ashes.

We destroyed in the docks and in the harbour thirteen vessels of war, mounting two hundred and thirty-four guns, with seventy-three merchant ships, and 800,000*l.* worth of property, after which we retired with the loss of only twelve men, three of whom were seamen, killed by a single random shot from St. Malo.

During this wild scene, there was something singular, almost touching, in the terror of the poor birds, when the air became alive with soaring and bursting shells, with showers of shot, thick with smoke, laden with the booming of the ordnance and the ceaseless roar or the conflagration.

Crows, larks, pigeons, and sparrows seemed to become paralysed by fear ; they fluttered, panted, and grovelled among the long grass and under the hedge-rows, in some instances crouching and hiding themselves in little coveys close to the dead and wounded Hussars (who lay where we had charged), as if to rebuke the spirit in man that made of earth a hell !

And so thought I, when, weary, wan, and pale, I retired with the troop towards our camp on the hills of Paramé.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EPISODE.

As the column of light cavalry wheeled off by sections to return to the camp and bivouac, a staff officer who was riding hurriedly past in the dark addressed me—

“Young man,” said he, “do you see those lights twinkling in the hollow yonder?”

“Yes, sir; the port fires of the artillery.”

“Exactly; ride with all speed to the officer commanding the brigade of guns and say it is the order of General Elliot that he falls back at once towards the hills of Paramé.”

I bowed, for the speaker was the general in person.

To execute this order, I had to ride nearly a mile to the rear, skirting the wide stretch of sand that lies between St. Malo and St. Servand. The morning was still quite dark, and the fires yet smouldered redly in the dockyards and harbour, while a heavy smoke and odour of burning loaded the air, which was very still and oppressive.

I rode towards the place, where the matches of the artillery shone brilliantly; but I had scarcely reached the flank of the brigade, when the whole force got into motion at a rapid trot, the gunners on their seats, and the drivers plying well their whips, as they wheeled off towards the hills with a tremendous noise,—chains, shot, rammers, sponges, and

buckets all swinging and clattering. Thus I had no occasion to deliver the anticipated orders of General Elliot; but as the artillerymen were driving with such fury, I reined up to let them pass, and followed leisurely in their rear.

Day was now beginning to break, and the summits of the hills and the spires of the city of St. Malo—in the dark ages the abode of saints, in more modern times the asylum of criminals—were brightening in the ruddy gloom; but smoke hung like a sombre pall over all the harbour below.

From time to time I could hear in the distance the hollow bay of the fierce dogs which watched the city walls, a custom that was not abolished until 1770, when one night they tore to pieces and devoured a naval officer.

The sound of water plashing by the wayside drew my horse towards it. The poor animal was thirsty after the long and weary patrol duty of the past night. The stream poured from a rock, and through a moss-green wooden duct fell into the stone basin of a wayside well, and there, while my horse drunk long and thirstily, I heard the rumble of the artillery as they passed away among the echoing mountains, and I was left alone in the rear.

By the roadside near the fountain, there grew a dense thicket of mulberry trees and wild broom-bushes, from amid which—just as I was turning my horse to ride off—there rung a half-stifled cry, followed by a fierce and very unmistakeable malediction in French—for that language, and not the old Armoric, is spoken by the Bretons of Dol and St. Malo.

Supposing that some unfortunate English straggler or wounded man might be lying there at the mercy of

some of the enemy, I drew a pistol from my holster and dismounted. My horse was so well trained, that I knew he would remain where I left him, while penetrating into the thicket. The gloom of the latter was excessive, but day was breaking, and a faint light stole between the slender stems of the trees.

Two figures now appeared—those of a man and woman. Having come close upon them unobserved, I now shrunk behind a bush to watch. The woman was on her knees, and her left shoulder reclined against the root of a tree; her whole attitude indicated weariness or despair, or both together. Her hands were tied with a scarf or handkerchief, and her dark hair hung over her face so as to conceal her features entirely. Close by her, and with one hand resting against the same tree, the man stood erect, but looking down, and surveying her with some solicitude, or at least with interest. He wore a peasant's frock of blue linen, girt at the waist by a belt with a square buckle. He was armed with a small hatchet and *couteau de chasse*, and carried in his right hand a knotted cudgel.

They were quite silent; at least I heard only from time to time the half-stifled sobs of the female.

"Here is some mystery or premeditated mischief," thought I; "let me watch warily."

At last the woman said faintly—

"Release me!"

The man uttered a growling guttural laugh.

"Release me, I implore you!" she continued in a voice of great softness and pathos.

"For the hundredth time you have thus implored me, mademoiselle, and for the hundredth time I reply—never."

"My father——"

"*Tonnerre de Ciel!* don't speak to me of your father," said the man, grinding his teeth; "I was an honest woodcutter in the Black Forest of Hunandaye till he ruined me."

"Impossible! my good father is incapable of such a thing."

"Nothing is impossible to dukes and peers of France, who have the Bastille and the dungeons of their own chateaux at their command."

"But he ruined you? Alas! how?"

"By permitting his nephew—the Comte de Bourg-neuf—to carry off my sister; and because I re-sented the act, he had my cottage demolished, my mother driven into the forest where she was devoured by wolves, and myself he chained to work like a felon on the roads and ramparts of St. Malo and the aque-ducts at Dol."

"Alas! monsieur, I swear to you that my father was blameless in all this, and even were it not so, why are you so merciless to me—why make me thus your prisoner?"

"Because you are beautiful," said the fellow, with a grating laugh. "Despite these wrongs, I risked my life for France, or rather for French gold. I have been at the bottom of the sea, *pardieu!* and am now on firm land. I have been dead, and am come alive again! Ha! ha! Bourgneuf carried off my sister. I carry off you—*chacun à son goût*—(every man to his taste.)"

"Ah! have mercy. See how I weep."

"Of course; weeping is a complaint that is very common among women. The count took my sister to Paris, and she was never heard of again. I shall take you to the Black Forest of Hunandaye, and never shall

you be heard of either, unless your friends are rash enough to seek you in the subterranean torrent of St. Aubin du Cormier."

"This fellow is mad; but whether mad or not, I must save the poor girl at all hazards," thought I, while shaking the priming in the pan of my holster pistol.

"Have you no dread of punishment, for thus daring to molest me?" demanded the lady.

"No. Neither here nor hereafter. You shall live with me in the forest, and when tired of you——"

"I shall escape and proclaim you."

"*Pardieu!* you wont, my beauty; because I shall kill you, and your disappearance will, like the king's ships, be set down to the score of these pestilent English, who have come hither to turn our Brittany upside down. Besides, who knows that *I* have earried you off?"

"And you will kill me—I, who never harmed you in thought, in word, or deed?" said she, with a shudder.

"Yes," he hissed through his clenched teeth.

"Oh, horror! Will no one rescue me?"

"*Oui! Sacré!* Kill you quietly and secretly, even as I killed quietly and surely the English captain of the Chevaux Légers in the wood near Canealle yesterday."

I started on hearing this, for the assassin of poor Captain Brook of the 11th was now covered by the muzzle of *my* weapon. The speaker was a tall, raw-boned fellow, whose form exhibited great strength and stature; he had a shambling gait, and a dirty visage of a very bilious complexion. His hair was black and shaggy; he had dark lack-lustre eyes and large, fierce, blubberlike lips, yellowed as his broken fangs were by

coarse tobacco-juice. I had somewhere before seen this hideous face, the features of which gradually came to view as the increasing light stole gradually through the mulberry wood. How was it that this countenance, so pale and repulsive, the forehead which receded like that of a hound, the immense frontal bones, and the square jaw like that of a tiger, were in some sort not unfamiliar to me ?

Though torn and in wild disorder, the dress of his prisoner, grey silk brocaded with white, evinced that she was of some rank, and her arms, which her tattered sleeves displayed almost to the shoulder, were beautiful in form and of exceeding delicacy.

"*Nombril de Belzebub !*" said he, suddenly, as he ground his teeth. "Come, come, we've had enough of this. Let us begone, lest those English wolves return."

Then the girl uttered a pitiful cry, as his huge knotty hand grasped her slender wrists.

"Kill me now !" she implored ; "for mercy's sake, kill me now !"

"By no means, my beauty—you must first see the black dingles of Hunandaye. I may kiss you as often as you please, but as for killing, until I weary of you, *pardieu !* there is no chance of that."

He was now proceeding to drag her along the ground, when I rushed forward, and by a blow of my sword felled the savage to the ground. A small cap of thick fur which he wore saved him from being cut, but not from the weight of a stunning blow.

With a dreadful Breton oath he leaped up, and with uplifted cudgel was springing on me, when on seeing my levelled pistol he paused and shrunk back, with a terrible expression of baffled rage and ferocity in his eyes.

Judge then of my astonishment on recognising in this hideous fellow the pretended French deserter, the spy, Theophile Damien or Hautois, whom I had met at Portsmouth—whom I had seen run up to the yard-arm of the *Essex*, and from thence consigned to the deep with a cold thirty-two pound shot at his heels!

CHAPTER XXI.

JACQUELINE.

HAD this man a charmed life? was he a vampire, a devil, or what? thought I, as we surveyed each other; and I have no doubt he recognised me, as he had seen me thrice before. I released the lady's hands from the handkerchief which bound them, and then raised her from the ground.

Hautois again lifted his bludgeon menacingly, but lowered it when I levelled my pistol straight at his head.

"Pass on, fellow—begone," said I, "or I shall pistol you without mercy. After our work last night, you cannot imagine that taking a Frenchman's life—especially yours—is a matter of much importance to me."

"*Sangdieu!*" he growled, "what business have you to interfere here?"

"Business—rascal!"

"Yes—this woman is my wife, who wishes to run away from me."

"Oh, horror! oh, absurdity!" exclaimed the young lady, as she gathered her dark hair back from her face with her pretty hands, and shrunk close to me.

"*Sangdieu*—yes, my wife, I tell you," shouted the

fellow, with a hand on the *couteau de chasse* in his girdle; but I replied—

“I have overheard enough to prove that you lie, villain; so begone at once, I say, or be punished as you deserve. Come, madam, permit me to assist you; my horse is close by, and from our camp at Paramé you shall have a safe escort to your home.”

She took my proffered hand with a very mingled or doubtful expression of face, for I was a stranger, a soldier, an enemy; but she had only a choice of evils, and knew that probably she could not fall into worse hands than those from which I took her. Then as I was leading her away, with her dark eyes fixed in terror and aversion on Hautois, she uttered a shrill cry which made me start and turn round; and I did so just in time to escape a deadly thrust aimed at my back. Indeed, the sharp blade of the *couteau de chasse* passed through my coat, grazing my left ribs, and almost severing my buff waist-belt.

Exasperated by this, I resolved to pistol the ruffian at once, and shot him through the jaws. On this, he fell on his face, wallowing in blood, and rolled among the long grass, with his hands pressed upon the wound in each cheek. The wretch was only wounded, however, not killed. The girl whom I had rescued was fainting with terror at this scene, so I hurried her off to where my horse still stood quietly by the wayside well.

Day had completely broken now, and I could perceive that my fair companion was undoubtedly a young lady of great beauty and polished manners. She was ghastly pale, doubtless with the terrors of the past night, and the extreme darkness of her hair and eyes served but to increase, by contrast, the pallor of her

complexion. Her hands, which were without gloves, proved her high breeding and delicate nurture, by their charming form and whiteness. The morning air was chill and damp, for the dews of night yet gemmed every leaf and blade of grass; and she shuddered with cold or fear, for she was without a head-dress, and her general attire was rather thin and scanty.

"You will permit me," said I, taking the cloak from my saddle and wrapping it round her; "and now say, to where can I escort you?"

"Not to the British camp, if possible, I pray you," she replied, while beginning to weep freely.

"I dare not be absent long," said I; "my duty leads me there, and by straggling, or loitering here——"

"True—true. *Ah, mon Dieu!* how selfish of me! you risk your life, perhaps, at the hands of our exasperated peasantry."

"Madam, I risk my life daily for a trooper's pay," said I, smiling; "so freely may I peril it for one so—so lovely as you."

She coloured at this reply, and drew back, on which I added, with a low bow, while my cheek reddened also—

"Pardon me—I forget myself."

"This is not the bearing or the language of an English private soldier," said she, approaching me again, placing her pretty hand upon my arm, and looking pleadingly in my face.

"Madam, though but a *simple soldat—un Ecossais Gris*, I am a gentleman, and have never done aught to disgrace my name."

"Then you will protect me, sir, will you not?"

"As I have already done, at the peril of my life."

"And *not* take me to the camp?"

"Not if safer shelter can be found."

"Even if I tell you who I am?" she continued, with a proud smile.

"Yes; but who——"

"I am the daughter of a French soldier."

"Thus you have an additional claim on my honour, madam."

"Mademoiselle—I am unmarried," she urged, with the faintest approach to coquetry in her dark eyes.

"And the daughter of a soldier, say you?"

"Le Maréchal Duc de Broglie."

"Who now commands in Germany?" I continued, with growing interest.

"The same, monsieur."

The scrap of conversation I had overheard between Captain Lindsay and Cornet Keith, during the night march, now flashed upon my memory.

"Pray tell no one else who you are," said I, hurriedly, while looking around me.

"*Pourquoi, monsieur?*" she asked, with almost hauteur.

"Because I heard an officer of rank say, that he would give a hundred and fifty English guineas to have you taken prisoner, and sent to London as a trophy."

She trembled and shrunk back on hearing this, lifting up her white hands deprecatingly.

"Oh be not alarmed, Mademoiselle de Broglie," said I, "for I would rather die than betray you."

"And how much may this reward be in French money?"

"About two thousand livres."

"Two thousand livres," she exclaimed, with a

haughty laugh and a flashing eye; "they hold me cheap, indeed, who offer this!"

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," said I, anxiously, "but I have no time to lose in having you conveyed to a place of safety. If absent from morning roll-call, my punishment will not be slight. The peasantry have all fled inland——"

"But surely in some farmhouse or cottage, I may find shelter."

"How comes it to pass the ruffian Hautois is still alive?" I asked, as we walked along the road with the bridle of my horse over my arm. "He was cast into the sea from the yard-arm of our commodore's ship, with a cannon-shot at his heels."

"From which the shot parted, by the rope giving way, as he sank into the water."

"Parted?"

"*Oui, monsieur*; so he told me; and thereupon he immediately rose to the surface and swam to the shore, while his less fortunate companion was instantly drowned."

"And how came you to be in his power? pardon my curiosity."

"It is most natural; I shall tell you, monsieur. Fearing that the province was to be overrun by your troops, we left our Chateau of Bourgneuf——"

"We, mademoiselle?"

"My aunt, Madame de Bourgneuf, and myself, to take shelter in the city of St. Malo; but our carriage arrived at St. Solidore too late last night, and Captain de Boisguiller, commandant of the redoubt at Cancale——"

"Ah, that little redoubt cost us some trouble."

"Gave us his own residence. You know what

ensued. Cannon shot fell through the roof of the house, on which my aunt, our servants, and I rushed forth into the streets, and were separated by a crowd of terrified fugitives. Ignorant alike whither to turn my steps, or where to seek shelter, while shells were bursting, flaming rockets and hand-grenades flying about in every direction, I rushed into a lonely alley, where I met a man who, by his attire, seemed to be one of our Breton peasantry—a woodcutter ; but ah, *mon Dieu !* he proved to be that wretch, Theophile Hautois. Politely enough he offered to conduct me to a place of safety, and led me from St. Solidore, away out into the fields, where the country was open and lonely. There he spoke of love, and attempted to kiss and caress me ; but I resisted, though sinking with terror, and struck him in the face with my clenched hand. Then he grew enraged, and tying my wrists, dragged me into that mulberry grove, where Heaven surely sent you to my rescue.”

“I am, indeed most fortunate in having been of such service to you, mademoiselle ; and I shall ever remember with pride that I have seen and had the honour of speaking with a daughter of the great Marshal de Broglie, the hero of Sangerhansen.”

She bowed and coloured with pleasure ; but when the sound of wheels was heard, she clasped her hands and exclaimed—

“*Ah, mon Dieu,* how fortunate ! Now, my kind friend, you shall be relieved of all further trouble with me, for here comes good and kind Father Celestine, le Curé of St. Solidore.”

While she spoke, a *désobligeant* (as those small chaises which hold only one person are not incorrectly named in France) was driven rapidly along the road ;

but the driver pulled up when my companion called to him by name :

“Jacquot — Jacquot Tricot — where is M. le Curé ?”

“Here, mademoiselle. Oh, *Clementissime Jesu* ! what has happened ? how are you here ?—who is this man ?—why in such company ? and who has dared—what has he done to you ? my dear child, Jacqueline, what is the meaning of all this ?” cried an old gentleman, all in a breath as he opened the door of the *désobligeant* and sprang agilely out. As he approached us, hat in hand, and bowing low at every pace, I could see that he was a fine looking old man—a priest, evidently, as he wore a black silk soutan, with at least fifty little buttons in front ; he wore also a tippet and small gold cross, and had his white hair tied behind by a black ribbon. His pale countenance was mild and pleasing, though he surveyed me with an expression of eye which evinced that he had no particular desire to cultivate *my* acquaintance ; and maitre Jacquot from his box regarded me with undisguised animosity and alarm.

“Ah, dearest Père Celestine,” said the young lady, clasping his proffered hand between both of hers, “I have been saved from great peril by this kind soldier ; but take me away with you—oh, take me away—and I shall tell you all about it.”

“Kind—ha—hum. *Monsieur le Soldat*, I thank you,” said the Curé, making a bow so profound, that a cloud of hair-powder flew about his head, and his little cocked hat, which he was too polite to assume before a lady, swept the road in his right hand ; “from my soul I thank you, for Mademoiselle Jacqueline is my dearest child.”

"Have I the honour of addressing——" I began, for this phraseology bewildered me.

"Le Père Celestine," said Mademoiselle de Broglie; "so I am now in perfect safety, thanks to your kindness and courage, monsieur; and now permit me to offer you that reward which any soldier may accept without reproach."

"She drew a ring from her finger, and placed it in my hand, saying with a bright coquettish smile—

"There is a language of precious stones, as well as of beautiful flowers, and if learned in such matters, you will know what this gem is significant of."

The old clergyman waved his hat, and laughed with great good humour, while the graceful girl bowed to me again and again as he handed her into the *désobligeant* and shut the door. The Curé then placed his hat on his head, for the first time during our interview, and with true French gallantry sprang on the narrow footboard behind his little carriage, which was rapidly driven off, Jacquot evincing, by his lavish use of the whip, his desire to place as great a distance as possible between himself and me.

The whole affair was like a dream. I placed the ring on my smallest finger, and thought with delight of the lovely little hand from which it had just been drawn. I gave a lingering glance after the fast retreating *désobligeant*, which was bowling along the road towards the ruined village of St. Solidore, and then, springing into my saddle, galloped in the direction of our camp, the white tents of which were shining in the rising sun, as they dotted the southern slope of the hills of Paramé.

The stone was a fine emerald.

"Of what is it significant?" thought I, remembering her words and her charming smile.

Charters, whom I met with three mounted Greys, coming in search of me, by order of the adjutant, told me that, "according to an old superstition, the emerald was supposed to ensure success in love.

Be that as it may, this gift of Jacqueline de Broglie has yet an important part to play in the story of my adventures.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARCH TO DOL.

THE city of St. Malo was now more closely reconnoitred by the commander-in-chief, as well as by General Elliot, the quartermaster-general, and other officers, who were unanimously of opinion that from its vast strength, a long time—a month at least—must elapse before it could be reduced; and as the heavy cannon and mortars requisite for such a siege were yet on board the fleet, the idea of any assault upon the place should be relinquished, more especially as French troops were advancing against us from Normandy, Maine, and Anjou. The approach by land to the small isle of Aaron on which it is situated is by a mole or causeway, three-quarters of a mile in length, by fifty-four feet in breadth, and this was daily covered by the tide with slimy weeds. The approach by sea was narrow, well defended by batteries, and was otherwise dangerous to vessels venturing within gunshot. On the north St. Malo was quite inaccessible, in consequence of the height of the rocks and strength of the fortifications which crown them. The city was crowded

with fugitives from the adjacent country, from which they had retired by order of the noblesse, magistrates, and echevins, to whom the Duke of Marlborough* sent a notice, that if the peasantry did not return peaceably to their houses, he "would set fire to them without delay."

He also published a manifesto making known "to all the inhabitants of Brittany, that the descent on their coast with the powerful army under our command, and our formidable armament by sea, was not made with the intention of making war on the inhabitants, except such as should be found in arms, or should otherwise oppose the just war which we were waging against His Majesty the most Christian King.

"Be it known, therefore," continues the manifesto, "to all who will remain in peaceable possession of their habitations and effects, that they may stay in their respective dwellings, and follow their usual occupations; and that, excepting the customs and taxes which they pay to the King, nothing will be required of them in money or merchandise but what is absolutely necessary for the subsistence of the army, and that for all the provisions they bring in ready money shall be paid, &c. Given from our headquarters at Paramé, June 7"

While the British general threatened destruction unless the peasantry returned, the French authorities, on the other hand, threatened to hang all who obeyed, so between them the poor Bretons were likely to have a fine time of it.

Our troop was now ordered to accompany a regi

*His Grace was Charles Spencer, fifth Earl of Sunderland, who succeeded to the honours of his illustrious grandfather, John Churchill, the great captain of Queen Anne's war.

ment of foot which was detached to Dol, a long march by steep old roads that went straight up one hill and down another. The day which succeeded that night of destruction at St. Servand and St. Solidore was beautiful. The sun of June was warm and glowing, and brightly it shone on the bluff rocks and embattled walls of St. Malo, on the masses of charred wreck that floated by the isle of Aaron ; on the dense old forests in the foreground, the blue hills whose wavy outline towered in the distance, and on the blue sea that stretched away towards the shores of England ; on the quaint old chateaux of the noblesse perched on rocks that overhung the mountain torrents, and on the picturesque hovels of their vassals that nestled under their protection, for vassalage yet lingered in primitive Brittany. These poor cottages, built of rough and unhewn stone, and plastered with mud, we generally found to be abandoned by the inhabitants at our approach. In some places we passed stacks of slowly-burning wood smouldering by the wayside ; but the poor charcoal-burners had fled when our drums woke the echoes of the mountain road.

"It is certainly not pleasant to find oneself in the character of an invader !" said Charters, as we rode leisurely on.

When we proceeded further, we found the farms abandoned, the villas deserted and stripped of all that was most valuable. Goats no longer grazed on the heathy mountain slopes, or cattle in the verdant meadows ; all had been driven off to forest recesses, to conceal them from us ; yet never was there less mischief done to private property by an invading force than by us on this occasion.

During a halt near an ancient church, Jack

Charters, observing the earth at the root of a tree to have been recently disturbed, thrust his sword into it, and about eighteen inches below the surface found all the sacred vessels of the altar, tied up in a tablecloth. There were three elaborately chased gold chalices, a patine, and several silver salvers and cruets. Our troops were making merry on the discovery of this plunder, when Charters, who never forgot his forfeited position, and felt himself still a gentleman, restored the whole to the curé of the church, who came to beg it of us. Soon after, an officer of one of our foot regiments found near a chateau a quantity of silver plate, worth several hundred pounds, concealed in the same manner. This officer sent the plate to the chateau, from which the proprietor was absent (for indeed he was no other than Captain the Chevalier de Boisguiller, who was making himself so active against us), together with a letter, purporting that he had restored the treasure, as we came not to war on the people, but the government of France. In proof of this, in many instances our men shared their scanty rations with the poor and needy whom they found by the wayside, and who trusted us.

Rumour of such acts as these having preceded us, we were kindly, even warmly received by the people or Dol, which is an ancient episcopal city surrounded by time-worn fortifications, and situated in the midst of what was then a marshy plain. Its mediæval streets are quaint and narrow, with picturesque gables and carved gablets that almost meet from either side of the way. We entered it without opposition, after a fourteen miles' march, and to our surprise the bells of the cathedral rung a merry peal in our honour. A contribution was levied on the city exchequer, and

there we passed the night after posting guards at all the gates and outposts beyond. The duty apportioned to the light troop of the Scots Greys was solely to furnish patrols on the various roads leading to Dol, to prevent a surprise, for as yet we knew not exactly what troops were in Brittany.

About daybreak on the following morning, I formed one of a party that patrolled the highway in the direction of St. Aubin du Cormier. Cornet Keith commanded, and Sergeant Duff and Corporal Charters were with us. Each officer and man carried oats for his horse in a bag, and a bundle of hay trussed up in a net behind the saddle. We were only *eleven* in all. Keith was a brave but inexperienced young officer, who had joined our corps from Richmond's Foot in consequence of an incident which made some noise in the service at the time. Richmond's regiment enjoyed the unfortunate reputation of being a duelling one. Indeed, there was scarcely an officer in it who had not, at some time or other, paraded, and killed or wounded his man; thus Keith, soon after joining it as a raw ensign, was informed by the captain of the Grenadiers, "a fire-eater," that another officer had treated him in a manner deserving severe notice, and that "after *what* had taken place"—the usual dubious, but constant phrase on such occasions—he of the Grenadiers would gladly act as his friend; *but* that if Keith omitted to parade the insulter duly by daybreak on the morrow, it would be noticed by the whole corps, and hopeless "Coventry" would be the result.

Keith was unable to perceive that he had been in the least insulted; but knew in a moment that his would-be friend had no other object in view than to test his courage and arrange a duel, a little luxury the corps

had not enjoyed for two months past. He perceived also, that to maintain his own reputation, the fatal pistol *must* be resorted to ; but as he had no intention of fighting an innocent man who had never offended him, he threw his leather glove in the face of the Grenadier, called him out, and shot him through the lungs, as a lesson for the future, and soon after obtained a transfer to the Greys, when we were cantoned among the villages of the Sussex coast, hunting for smugglers.

We were riding leisurely in file, through a narrow lane, about two miles from Dol. It was bordered by wild vines, and shaded by chestnut trees. The grey daylight was just breaking ; and the sweet odour of the bay myrtle and of the wild flowers came on the morning breeze from the marshes that lay between us and the city. Save the tinkling of some chapel bell for matins among the mountains all was still, and we heard only the hoofs of our horses and the clatter of their chain bridles ; but judge of our astonishment when wheeling out of the narrow lane upon the highway that led direct to Dol—the path by which we could alone return—we found in our front a party of French Light Horse, forty at least of the same Hussars we had encountered in the night near St. Solidore ; and the moment we came in sight they began to brandish their sabres, and to whoop and yell in that manner peculiar to the French before engaging, while many shouted loudly—

“Vive le Roi ! à bas les Anglais !”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SKIRMISH.

OUR young Cornet Keith never for an instant lost his presence of mind, for he came of a brave stock, the old Keiths of Inverugie ; thus he was a near kinsman of Marshal Keith, who fell at the head of the Prussian army on the plain of Hochkirchen.

"We must charge and break through those fellows," said he, coolly and rapidly, "or we shall all be taken and cut to pieces."

"I fear, sir, it is impossible to break through," said Sergeant Duff, as he cocked his holster pistol.

"Nothing of this kind is impossible to the Scots Greys!" replied the young officer, proudly.

"Lead on, sir ; and we shall never flinch," said Charters, with flushing cheek.

"Keep your horses well in hand, my lads," cried Keith. "We may not *all* be killed—so prepare to charge! spur at them—fire your pistols right into their teeth, and then fall on with the sword. Forward—charge—hurrah and strike home!"

We received a confused discharge of pistols from those French Hussars. One of our horses fell and crushed his hapless rider. In the next moment we were right among them—firing our pistols, and hewing right and left, or fiercely giving point to the front, with our long straight broadswords, beneath the weight of which their short crooked sabres were as children's toys. Here Big Hob Elliot cut a Hussar's sword arm clean off, by a single stroke, above the elbow. Still they were too many for us. There was a brief and most unequal hand to hand conflict amid the smoke of

our pistols, and red sparks sprang high as the steel blades met and rung. Cornet Keith clove one Hussar to the eyes, ran a second through the breast, and being well mounted on a magnificent grey horse, broke through the press of men and chargers, and effected a retreat or flight—which you will—to Dol. Six others, of whom Jack Charters and Hob Elliot were two—succeeded in following him; but three perished under the reiterated blows of more than twenty sabres, while I, separated from the rest, had my horse thrust half into a hedge by the pressure and numbers of the enemy, whose leader, a brilliantly attired hussar officer, with a white scarf across his shoulder, and a golden grand cross of St. Louis dangling from its crimson ribbon at his breast, attacked me with great vigour.

Finding that I was quite his equal with the sword, he drew a pistol from his saddle-bow and fired it straight at my head. By a smart use of the spurs and bit, I made my horse rear up; thus the bullet entered his neck and saved me. Then in its agony the poor animal made a wild plunge, and bursting through the mob of hussars who pressed about me, rushed along the road with such speed that I was soon safe, even from their carbines, and found myself alone and free, without a scratch or scar. On, on flew the maddened horse, I knew not whither. There was a gurgling sound in his throat, and with every bound the red blood welled up and poured from the bullet-wound over his grey skin, which was drenched with the flowing torrent. I lost my grenadier cap as he flew on, past cottages of mud and thatch, and chateaux with turrets, vanes, and moats; past wayside wells and votive crosses, and past those tall grey monoliths and cromlechs that stud so thickly all the land of Brittany;

past fields of yellowing buck-wheat and thickets of pale green vines, till, at a sudden turn of the road, near an ancient bridge that spanned a deep and brawling torrent, he sank suddenly beneath me, and fell heavily on the ground.

Disengaging myself from the saddle and stirrups, I proceeded to examine the horse's wound. His large eyes were covered with film, and his long red tongue was lolling out upon the dusty road. My gallant grey was in his death agony, and thrice drew his sinewy legs up under his belly and thrust them forth with convulsive energy. At the third spasm, when I was stooping to examine the wound, his off fore hoof struck me like a shot on the right temple, inflicting a most severe and stunning wound, and I sank senseless and bleeding beside him. Half-an-hour probably elapsed before perfect consciousness returned. Then I found my face so plastered by the blood which had flowed from my wound, that my eyes were almost sealed up by it, and my hair, which was curled (as we wore it so, and *not* queued, like the troops of other corps), was thickly clotted also.

In the *mêlée*, or race, I cannot remember which, I had lost my sword and pistols, so concealment was my first thought; my second, anxiety to reach Dol or the camp at Paramé. How either was to be achieved in a country where my red uniform marked me as a mortal foe and invader, to be shot down—destroyed by any man, or by any means—was a point not easy to solve. Moreover, I knew not the language of Brittany, in only some districts of which French is spoken. I left my dead grey—poor Bob, for so he was named—with a bitter sigh; for daily, since I became a soldier, had the noble horse fed from my hand, and he knew

my voice as well as the trumpet call for "corn" or "water." I walked along the road unsteadily, giddy, faint, and ill. After proceeding about a quarter of a mile, I came upon a four-wheeled wain laden with straw, and standing neglected, apparently, by the wayside. No horses were harnessed to it, and no driver or other person was near. It seemed to offer a comfortable place of concealment. I clambered up, and, nestling down among the straw, tied my handkerchief round my contused head to stop further bleeding, and in a few minutes, overcome by the sleepless patrolling of the past night, the excitement and peril of the recent conflict, the long and mad race run by my dying horse—a race perhaps of twenty or thirty miles—the pain of the wound his hoof had given me, and the consequent loss of blood, I fell into a deep and dreamless stupor, for I cannot call it sleep. While I was in this state, it would seem that the proprietor of the wain had come hither, yoked thereto a pair of horses, and, all unconscious that there was anything else there than straw, forage for the cavalry of the most Christian King—least of all a "*sacré-Anglais*"—in the wain, drove leisurely and quietly off, I knew not whither, as I neither stirred nor awoke.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HUSSARS AGAIN.

EVENING had come on before I was awake, and, on looking upward, saw above me the green leafy branches of some great trees. Then, on peeping from my nest amid the straw, I found, to my very great astonishment, that the wain was *not* in the same place where I

had entered it, but that it was now at the end of a long and stately avenue, and close to an embattled wall, in which there opened an arched gateway surmounted by a coat of arms carved in stone. I was about to investigate this circumstance further, when the sound of voices near me, or apparently immediately under the huge wain, made me shrink down and lie still and breathless to listen.

"Come, come, *mon ami*, don't lose your temper, for I assure you that you have none to spare," said a female voice.

"Bah ! you always laugh when I kiss you, Angélique," replied a man, reproachfully ; "why is this ?"

"Because, Jacquot, your moustaches tickle me."

"You are always rather too ticklish between the nose and chin," retorted the other.

"Perhaps so, when Monsieur de Boisguiller and his hussars are here."

"*Pardieu*, if this be the case, then I shall go back to St. Malo, to dine with the fat cits and dance with their pretty daughters."

"You ? -Ha ! ha !"

"Laugh as you may, mademoiselle ; the coachman of Monsieur le Curé of St. Solidore, who holds the consciences of half the province in his keeping, is not without some importance at St. Malo, be assured."

"*Que vous êtes bon !* (what a simpleton you are !) Kiss me and say nothing more."

A certain remarkable sound followed ; then the lovers, apparently reconciled, passed through the archway, and I could perceive that the man was no other than Jacquot Tricot, who had driven the *désobligeant* of the old Curé of St. Solidore, and that his companion was a pretty young Bretonne, with fine features and coal-

black eyes, and having her dark hair dressed back *à la marquise*, under a tall white cap of spotless lineu. She wore a tight red bodice, with its armholes so large that at the back only an inch or two of the stuff remained between the shoulders; but under this she had a pretty habit-shirt, which fully displayed the swelling form of her fine bust and shoulders. Her ample but short black skirt, embroidered with silver, announced, after the Breton custom, that she was not altogether dowerless, and by her high instep, smart ankle, and taper leg, no one could doubt that Angelique was a charming dancer.

I am thus particular in describing this girl, who was a piquante little country beauty, full of queer Breton exclamations, because our acquaintance did not end here.

My wound was very painful. I felt weak and light-headed; but the consciousness that other concealment was necessary made me look about for a new lurking-place. On one side of the avenue there opened a spacious lawn; on the other lay a lake, and above the embattled wall and gateway the turrets of a chateau were visible in the sunshine. In the middle of the lawn grew a thicket of shrubs or dwarf trees. My course was soon determined on—to reach the thicket and remain there concealed till nightfall, and trust the rest to Providence. I dropped from the summit of the straw-laden wain, and, passing quickly through the line of lofty trees, was about to hurry across the lawn, when I heard a shout uttered by many voices, and found myself within fifty paces of a strong party of French Hussars, who had picketed their horses near the avenue, and were quietly enjoying, *al fresco*, a meal which had no doubt been sent to them from the cha-

teau. It was quite a military picnic, as they were all lounging on the grass, around cold pies, fowls, tarts, and bottles of wine, with their jackets open, their belts and pelisses off. So busy had they been with their jaws, that their tongues had been silent hitherto, and thus I knew nothing of a vicinity so dangerous, until it was too late to retreat. Being defenceless, my first thought was to advance confidently and surrender myself as a prisoner of war ; but, on seeing that while some rushed to their holsters to procure pistols, others scratched up their sabres, with cries of—

“Down with the Englishman ! *Sacre Dieu !*”

“Shoot him down !”

“*A bas les Anglais !*”

“*Tuez ! Tuez !* Cut him to pieces !” and so forth, I turned and fled towards the chateau, followed by the whole party, some twenty in number, on foot.

Several shots were fired, but I escaped them all. I passed the wain, dashed through the gateway within which Angelique and Jacquot were still tenderly cooing and billing, and crossed the gravelled courtyard, closely pursued by the hussars, who would no doubt have immolated me there, had not a young lady who was standing on the steps of the entrance-door in conversation with a brilliant-looking cavalry officer, rushed forward and courageously and humanely interposed between them and me, with her arms outspread.

“*Pardieu !* where did you come from, *Coquin ?* Cut the fellow down !” exclaimed the officer, who was the Chevalier Guillaume de Boisguiller, and in whom I recognised my antagonist of the morning—he of the white scarf, crimson ribbon, and grand cross of St. Louis.

“*Ah, je vous prie, monsieur le Chevalier—Messieurs*

les soldats, don't harm him, pray," cried the young lady ; and then she added—"Nay, hold, I command you!"

"What! you intercede for him, do you?" said the officer, with haughty surprise.

"Yes—I do, monsieur."

"Although he is one of those pestilent English who have been playing the devil at Cancalle and St. Malo?"

"I care not—I am Jacqueline de Broglie."

It was she indeed—she whom I had rescued, and who gave me the emerald ring by the wayside well ; but she was now so richly attired, and had her fine hair so perfectly dressed, that I did not at first, and in such a terrible crisis, recognise her.

"*Parbleu*, 'tis very well. Fall back, comrades, sheath your sabres, and finish your luncheon, for we march at sunset," said the captain, twisting his short moustache ; "but what am I to understand by all this, mademoiselle?"

"That he saved my life—my honour—scarcely four-and-twenty hours ago," said she, emphatically.

"*Sacré!* he nearly took both my life and honour this morning," said the chevalier, with a grimace.

"And he is wounded—severely, too—the poor fellow!" she added, in a voice of tender commiseration.

"What! is this the soldier of whom you were just speaking—he who saved you from that rascal Hautois, on the night St. Solidore was cannonaded and destroyed?" asked the hussar, with surprise.

"The same, Monsieur de Boisguiller, and I demand that here, on my own threshold, his life shall be respected."

"So be it, mademoiselle ; for your sake I would spare the lives of the whole British army, if such were

your wish—assuredly it should not be *mine*,” said the captain, bowing low, with a tender glance in his eye.

“I thank you, M. le Chevalier,” replied the lady, laughing.

“And I congratulate you, M. le soldat, on having such an intercessor,” said the Frenchman, making a merit of necessity, and with somewhat of apparent frankness presenting his hand to me.

At that moment the whole place, the chateau with its turrets, the chevalier and the lady, appeared to whirl round me; the light went from my eyes, and darkness seemed to descend in its place; I made a wild clutch at a railing to prevent myself from falling, but failed; and sinking on the steps that led to the entrance, remember no more of that interview. For several days after this, all was confusion or all oblivion to me. I was delirious and in a burning fever.

CHAPTER XXV

MY NURSE.

WHERE WAS I? My next recollection, as the world came slowly back to me, or I to it, was the circumstance of finding myself in a small octagonal chamber, which was hung with pretty, but rather gaudy pictures of saints, in long scarlet or blue garments; there was St. Peter with his keys, St. Andrew with his cross, St. Catherine with her wheel, and St. Malo with something else. There were also a crucifix and little font of Delft ware hung on the wall near me. I was in a bed that was prettily draped by snow-white curtains, which hung from a ring in the ceiling, and formed a complete bell-tent around me, but were festooned back on one

side. The soft pillows were edged with narrow lace. The sun of the summer noon shone through the vine and ivy shaded lattice, which was open, and the hum of the honey bee, with the sweet perfume of summer flowers, came in together on the soft and ambient air. Close at hand stood a *guéridon*, as the French name those little round tables which have three feet and one stem ; and thereon were some phials, a vase of flowers, and a silver cup, which suggested to me, somehow, an idea of medicine. I passed a hand across my brow ; it was painful to the touch, and throbbed. My eyes were hot and heavy ; my hand looked pale, thin and white—quite unlike what it usually was ; hence I must have been long ill—but *where* ?

I strove to rise, that I might look forth from the window ; but the effort was too much for me yet, and I sank back on my pillow. I seemed to have had strange dreams of late—dreams of my brief soldiering ; of the burning of the shipping ; the faces and voices of Charters, Kirkton, and others had come distinctly—especially poor Tom's (the "stickit minister," as the Greys named him), and the words of his song lingered in my ear :—

"Why, soldiers, why
Should we be melancholy, boys,
Whose business 'tis to die?"

I had strange recollections of a warlike encounter with old Nathan Wylie in a wood in Brittany, and shooting him there, to save my cousin Aurora, whom he was tying to a tree. Then my wound from the charger's hoof, and the events subsequent thereto, gradually and coherently unfolded themselves before me. But *where* was I, and to whom indebted. Some one moved near me ; I was certain there was the fall of a gentle foot—of one who stepped on tiptoe.

"Who is there?" I asked in English, and then repeated the question in French.

"Ah, you are awake—awake at last!" said a soft voice, in the latter tongue.

"Who speaks?"

"*C'est moi*—'tis only me," replied a girl whose face was familiar to me, as she drew back the curtain.

"Angelique?" said I, with an effort.

"Yes, Angelique; how droll; you know my name, monsieur!"

It was the pretty Bretonne, with her scanty bodice and spotlessly white habit-shirt; her black eyes beaming with kindness and pleasure; her dark hair surmounted by her high linen coif of a fashion old as the days of Charles VIII.

"You know me—you are sensible at last," she continued; "ah, how happy mademoiselle will be to hear of this?"

"Who is she?"

"Ah, good heavens—it is possible—don't you know Mademoiselle de Broglie, your protectress?"

"And you?"

"I have the honour to be her *soubrette*—her friend almost, for we are foster children. Every morning and every night I made a sign of the cross on your forehead with the holy water from my font, and I knew that it would cure you, even if everything else failed."

"Cure me—I have, then, been ill?"

"*O! mon Dieu*—so ill!" shrugging her white shoulders and clasping her little hands.

"But say Mademoiselle Angelique, pray where am I?"

"In my room."

"Yours

"Oui, monsieur—there is nothing wonderful in that, is there?"

"And this bed?"

"It is *mine*," said she, smiling.

"You quite bewilder me," said I, with a sigh.

Her dark eyes and white teeth shone, as she burst into a fit of laughter and said :—" *Ah, mon Dieu*, what would Jacquot—the jealous Jacquot—think, if he knew that a strange man had occupied my bed for two weeks?"

"Have I been here so long?"

"Yes, monsieur—you have been very ill."

"And you—you——"

"I have been occupying the apartments of Mademoiselle de Broglie ; ah, good heaven, what were you thinking of?" said the *soubrette*, with another merry laugh. "You occupy my room in the Chateau of Bourgneuf, belonging to the Countess Ninon, mother of the young count, who now is fighting under Maréchal de Broglie in Germany."

"Would Boisguillers' Hussars really have killed me, alone and defenceless as I was?"

"Killed you, my poor child? of course they would."

"Are they still here?" I asked, with natural anxiety.

"*Ma foi!* no—they have long since been gone in pursuit of the English, who are flying in all directions towards the sea. These Hussars are very ferocious. Some of them are contributions from the *Fours* of Paris, and valuable contributions to the army *they* are, as every one knows."

"*Fours*—I know not what you mean."

"Indeed!"

"No, I assure you," said I, laying my hand by chance upon hers.

"*Ma foi !* it is quite true what Père Celestine says—nothing is taught in England but heresy. The *Fours* in Paris are places of confinement, formed by a Monsieur d'Argenson, wherein all wanderers and vagabonds found in the streets are shut up, till the best are drafted off to the army, and several of these choice recruits fell to the lot of M. de Boisguiller. So you had an escape, my poor boy ; they would positively have eaten you !"

"You are very patronising, Angelique," said I, amused by the girl's manner ; "pardon me, but how old are you ?"

"One year older than my mistress."

"And she will be——"

"Nineteen by the next feast of St. Malo ; but hush, you must not talk any more. You are looking quite flushed already—now taste this."

In perfect innocence she put her plump white arm round my neck, raised my head upon her pretty shoulder, took the silver cup from the *guéridon*, and poured between my lips some of the cooling liquid it contained.

"You are kind to me as a sister," said I.

"And I have nursed you so long, that I quite feel like one."

Her large dark eyes looked kindly into mine, and I could see my face reflected in them.

"So long ?" I murmured.

"Yes ; fourteen days and fourteen nights."

"Ah, how can I ever repay all this ?"

"By trying to sleep, and sleep you must," said she ; then laying my head gently on the pillow, she with-

drew her arm, and closing my eyelids playfully with her fingers, said again in my ear, "Sleep;" and adding, "Père Celestine tells us that St. Paul said 'all kisses were not holy,' but there can be no harm in *these*." And touching each eyelid with her cherry lip, she patted me on the cheek and glided away.

But the tumult of thought banished sleep, and indeed she left me very much awake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS OF THE ARMY.

FOR two days that succeeded, the kindness and attention of my little French nurse were undiminished, and on the third a soft dressing-gown was brought to me, and I found myself seated in an easy-chair at the open window, with a view of the distant hills, and in a fair way to convalescence.

Was the pretty *soubrette* in love with me, or was her peculiar manner merely the impulsive nature of the Breton, together with genuine pity for a helpless fellow-creature—a poor young soldier—whom she had nursed? Of course it was, for otherwise she would not have spoken so frankly or so frequently of her lover, Jacquot Tricot. Notwithstanding the favours then heaped on me by fortune, such is the perversity of human nature, that instead of being grateful for them, at times, as I lay there, helpless, wounded, weary and alone, thinking of the past, of what I was, and what I should have been, something of the sullenness of despair stole into my heart, and I actually longed for death to rid me of all further trouble, or care for the future. But to die there unknown, and so far away from the sequestered

churchyard, where, in a pastoral glen upon the Scottish Border, my father and mother lay side by side, with the green mounds that covered them within sound of the silver Tweed, was not the end I had so long anticipated.

Though a soldier, I was but a boy ; and amid my loneliness in that foreign land, I wept for the mother of whom I had known so little, and hoped that from her place in heaven she was watching over me, and perhaps could see me there. Thought, reflection, and memory more frequently rendered me fierce than sad, and then I closed my eyes, as if to shut out the light and the world itself.

During one of these dreamy paroxysms of bitterness, a soft hand was laid gently on my flushed forehead. I looked up, and saw a lady—a lovely young girl—with the soubrette beside me. She was Jacqueline de Broglie ! I strove to rise and make some due obeisance, but by an unmistakeable gesture she excused or rather restrained me.

When I had first seen this noble-looking girl, her hair was dishevelled, her dress was torn and disordered, her face was pale and distorted by fear, and her eyes red and swollen by weeping. Now I beheld her perfectly calm, self-possessed, and richly-apparelled, for her dress was of orange-coloured satin trimmed with black Maltese lace, and it well became the purity of her complexion and the intense darkness of her eyes and hair, every tress of which bore evidence of the skilful hands of Angelique. At first I thought her stately in bearing and very pretty in feature, but as we conversed, she rapidly became beautiful, and dangerously so, as her expressive face lit up with animation. Her smile was lovely, winning, and childlike ;

it was the true gift of nature, but there was a singular combination of boldness and extreme delicacy in the contour of her features. Her forehead was broad rather than high; the curve of her nostril was noble; her mouth and chin full of sweetness and decision. Add to these, a wonderful mass of rich dark hair, in all the luxuriance of girlhood, and you see Jacqueline. She drew in a chair and seated herself near me, while Angelique stood behind. She expressed her satisfaction to find that I was recovering, but added that the observance of the greatest secrecy was necessary; that to save me from the rough peasantry, who were infuriated by our wanton irruption into Brittany, she had kept me concealed in a wing of the chateau. She mentioned that to deceive alike the servants of the family, the neighbouring peasantry, and the Hussars of the Chevalier de Boisguiller, it had been given out that I was conveyed away in M. le Curé's *désobligeant* to Dol; while in fact, by the exertions of the curé and Angelique, I had been supported to my present room when in a state of insensibility, and had remained there in secrecy to the great risk of my own life, and of the honour of my protectresses if discovered. This was the plain and unvarnished story, though Jacqueline worded it in a more delicate and gentle manner.

"I am most grateful to you, mademoiselle," said I, "for your kindness, your charity to me."

"Kindness—charity! Why such cold words? *Mon Dieu!* monsieur, do not talk thus. Could I do less than, at every hazard, to save and protect one who saved and protected me?" she exclaimed, bending her dark and beautiful eyes on mine with an expression of half-reproach and inquiry which made my heart throb almost painfully, for I was still weak and faint.

"And I have trespassed, intruded on your hospitality for so many days. In that time what may have been the fortune of war with my comrades? And madame your aunt; did she escape that night at St. Solidore?"

"Yes; fortunately she reached St. Malo by a boat, and has not yet returned; so at present I am lady supreme here—chatelaine of Bourgneuf."

"I have been ill—very ill, and must have lost much blood," said I, as the room seemed to whirl round me; "who has been my doctor?"

"Angelique, with my assistance. There are no doctors nearer than Rennes, the nuns of St. Gildas excepted, and they could not be taken into our confidence, though good Père Celestine was. So what was to be done, but to seclude you here at the top of the house and trust to Heaven and your youth for recovery."

"Dear Mademoiselle de Broglie, all this was more than I had any reason to expect of you—more than human kindness! Had I died here, what would you have done?"

"Prayed for you," was the reply; "but ah, don't speak of such a thing!"

"How the child talks!" said Angelique; "Monsieur de Boisguiller's Hussars are playful lambs when compared to our Breton peasants—our woodcutters and charcoal-burners. They would have torn you limb from limb had they caught you. *Ma foi!* yes—and they would storm the chateau, perhaps, if they knew you were in it, as one would crack a nutshell to get at the kernel."

"How far are we from the hills of Paramé?"

"About fifteen leagues," replied Mademoiselle de Broglie; "but why do you ask?"

"Because our camp was there, mademoiselle."

"My poor friend, you are not aware of what has taken place since fortune cast you almost dying at our door."

"A battle has been fought!"

"No; for the Duke of Marlborough, who lacks the skill of his great namesake, on hearing that certain forces were marching against him, under Monseigneur le Duc d'Aiguillon, Governor of Brittany, withdrew his troops from Dol and Paramé, and retreating with all speed to the bay of Cancele, embarked his whole forces there on the 12th of this month, and sailed for England."

"Are all gone?" I inquired, with irrepressible agitation.

"All—save the dead and you."

"And I am left here!" I exclaimed, overcome with consternation.

"With *us*," replied the lady, with a pouting smile.

"True, mademoiselle; my exclamation is alike ungrateful and ungallant; what matter is one poor trooper more or less."

"However, monsieur may soon see his friends again," continued Mademoiselle de Broglie, "for they still menace our poor province of Brittany. So stormy has been the weather, that it was not until the 21st of this month the fleet got clear of the coast of France. On the 25th it was visible off Hâvre de Grace, which M. Marlborough bravely enough reconnoitred in an open cutter; but Heaven favoured us with another tempest, and the British were blown out to sea. On the 27th——"

"Yesterday!"

"Only yesterday, as the Chevalier de Boisguiller in-

formed me this morning, they came to anchor within two miles of Cherbourg, and hoisted out some flat-bottomed boats with the English guards to attack the forts of Querqueville and L'Homme; but again kind Heaven——”

“With St. Malo and St. Suliac,” interposed the soubrette.

“Sent a storm, so the attempt was abandoned, and Monsieur Howe stood off to sea, where many of his transports were dashed to pieces.”

“Many must have perished, and among them may be some of my dear friends!” said I, sadly.

“I hope not, monsieur. But your people should not have landed in Brittany, which has ever been the best bulwark of France—‘La Bretagne, Brettonnante,’ as we say. When the wild Norseman menaced our shores, in the days of King Dagobert, it was here they met with the most bloody resistance. Here Bertrand de Guesclin routed the English in the days of Charles VI., and here, too, were they defeated in the days of Charles VII. by Arthur, Count of Richemont, who was Constable of France and Duke of Bretagne; while in the last century your fleets were swept from our shores by those of Du Guay Trouin. So excuse me saying, *mon ami*, that you were most unwise to attack our old Celtic province of Brittany.”

I could scarcely conceal a smile at this little bit of gasconade, when I remembered how much mischief we had done to government property, the ships and stores we had destroyed, unopposed by any armed force save a few hussars; but the loveliness of the lips that spoke repressed the rising spirit of retort.

“However,” she added, smiling, “I am a Parisienne—not a Bretonne.”

"And why—why——"

"What, monsieur le soldat?"

"Why banished to this wild province?"

"I am not banished, as you unpleasantly term it," said she, colouring; "but while my father is at the head of an army in Germany, he prefers that I should reside here, with my aunt, Madame de Bourgneuf. But we have talked too long, and I must have wearied you."

"You, mademoiselle!" I was beginning, when she rose and said—

"Another day I will visit you, so for the present adieu."

I was no longer the bashful boy who had so timidly confessed his love to little Ruth Wylie. A few months of soldiering had rubbed the rust completely off me. Thus, when this French girl, with all her imposing presence, presented her hand to me, I pressed it to my lips with an air so tender and withal so perfectly confident, that she withdrew it rather hastily and retired.

I was again alone. Strange and mysterious was the power that lurked in those lovely eyes—in the slow droop of the fringed lids, and their upward sweep when they flashed in smiles upon me. I lay back in my easy chair and closed my eyes, but they still seemed to see the face and form of Jacqueline de Broglie.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOURGNEUF.

THE chateau of Bourgneuf, within which I so singularly found myself an inhabitant, stands* on the north slope of a hill, about a mile from the old highway that leads from Dol to Rennes, the capital of Brittany, where *bourg* signifies especially a village or residence. It was a fabric of striking aspect, but of large and irregular proportions, having been built in the days of local war and turbulence, when the lords of Bourgneuf kept constantly a numerous body of armed men about them. As the household consisted now only of the widowed countess (then at St. Malo), her niece Mademoiselle de Broglie, and a few servants, for the young count was serving with his regiment, but a small portion of this great mansion was inhabited, and thus a melancholy stillness reigned in its long, shady galleries, great suites of apartments, and round towers, the bases of which were washed by the waters of a lake. It had at least twenty steep conical roofs on its towers and turrets, and each of these was surmounted by a grotesque iron girouette, as the French name those vanes which were exclusively placed on the houses of their ancient nobility.

In this chateau had Isabelle of Scotland, daughter of James I., passed two nights when proceeding to Rennes, where, in 1442, she was married to Francis I., Duke of Brctagne ; where the peasants yet sing of her beauty, and the luxuriance of her golden hair.

The edifice resembled in style several of our old

* We may now say *stood*, as it was demolished in the wars subsequent to the Revolution.

Scottish baronial dwellings, such as Glammis or Castle Huntly, and I afterwards learnt that it had been engrafted on an older fortress of the Counts of Brittany, in which died Alain with the Strong Beard, in the tenth century ; and like all ancient castles in France, it had its legends of blood and sorrow. It was approached from the Rennes road through two rows of ancient yews, of vast size, towering, solemn, and sombre. Between each of these stood an orange-tree in a green tub ; and in the garden were long walks covered with closely cut grass, and a labyrinth of trim beech hedges of great height, amid the dense leaves of which the lark and yellow-hammer built their nests undisturbed. I remember the spacious entrance-hall, with its floor of tessellated marble, its tall cabinets of ebony and *marqueterie*, piled with rare china and Indian pagodas ; its trophies of arms, a barred helmet or dinted corslet forming the centre of each ; its vast dining-hall, with deeply-recessed windows, tapestry curtains, and chairs covered with rose-coloured brocaded silk ; and in that hall, Francis II., last Duke of Brittany, had been feasted in 1459 by Roderique, Count of Bourgneuf, who was slain by a Burgundian knight six years after the battle of Montleheri.

The long disused moat of the old mansion was overgrown by wild brambles, and masses of clematis and ivy shrouded the cannon, carriages and all on the bastion at the outer gate. Old pieces they were—old perhaps as days of the League ; and above the gate they had once defended, were carved the three besants of Bourgneuf, impaled with the saltire of Broglie. Such was the old chateau in Brittany, wherein the fortune of war had so strangely cast me.

On the window of my bedroom I one day discovered

the name of the author of "Gil Blas," Alain René le Sage (who was a Breton), written with a diamond, for he had once visited the chateau ; this window overlooked the lake, which was covered by water-lilies, and bordered by long reedy grass, where the snipe lay concealed, and the tall heron waded in search of the gold-scaled barbel. Beyond this lake rose some steep and rugged rocks, nearly covered by the yellow bells of the wild gorse ; and on the highest stood a haunted Druid stone, around which the fairies and the *poulpi-cous* (their husbands) danced on certain nights. This stone, as Angelique assured me, bore a deep mark, the cut of Excalibur, the sword of King Arthur, who is peculiarly the national hero of the Bretons.

How was I to get away from this secluded place ? By sea every port and harbour were watched and guarded. If discovered, the military authorities would certainly put me to death without much inquiry, as a spy ; the peasantry as an invader ; the local magistrates or lords, would be sure to dispose of me as *both*. This was a tormenting question which even my kind little nurse Angelique could in no way answer. Indeed, she detailed so many difficulties to be overcome, and so many dangers to be dared, that there seemed a probability of my spending the term of my natural life at the Chateau of Bourgneuf, unless Commodore Howe with his fleet, and his Grace of Marlborough with at least ten thousand men, paid again a special visit to Brittany, the chance of which was very slender ; and a conversation, a portion of which I was compelled to overhear, between Angelique and her lover Jacquot, served still more to increase my anxiety to be gone. He had come to announce the return of the countess in a few days, after a certain

pilgrimage, in which she was to accompany Père Celestine and a train of devotees to the Hole of the Serpent, and see the silver cross of St. Suliac dipped three times in the lonely cave of La Guvre, a famous religious superstition of the Bretons. What I overheard took place on the fourth day of my convalescence.

"So you are sulky and in a pet, Monsieur Jacquot?" said the soubrette, pouting, with her hands in the pockets of her little apron.

"Perchance I have reason to be so, Mademoiselle Angelique," replied the other, with his hands thrust into his breeches pockets.

"You think yourself very clever, no doubt?"

"*Parbleu!* what if I do?"

"I have heard that when at school——"

"Bah! don't talk of our days at school. All clever men are dunces there."

"A clever boy *you* must have been!"

"*Morbleu!*" growled Jacquot; "a lover does not like to be laughed at."

"In such a humour, Monsieur Jacquot, what in the name of goodness brings you to me?"

"Say rather *badness*, mademoiselle, and it may better suit your disposition."

"Indeed! are you jealous of anyone again? Monsieur de Boisguiller and his hussars are now gone to Rennes."

"Yes; but the spark who walks with you on the north terrace in the twilight——"

"*O ciel!* what are you saying?"

"Yes, and whom I have caught so often lurking among the shrubbery and in the avenue at night; he, at least, is *not* gone to Rennes. An ugly fellow he is too, with a mark like a bullet-hole in each cheek. Eh, Mademoiselle Angelique, what say you to this?"

I did not hear the girl's reply, and they moved away from the room adjoining mine ; but I had heard enough to cause me intense alarm. I had been twice on the north terrace in the evening with Angelique ; but *who* was the lurker detected by Jacquot in the shrubbery and avenue ?

"An ugly fellow with a mark like a bullet-hole in each cheek !" My heart foreboded in a moment that he must be the ruffian Hautois. If he had traced me to the chateau, I was lost indeed !

No sooner was Jacquot gone, than Angelique came to me, and repeated all that I had previously heard, adding that some disguise was necessary now ; but we knew not what kind to adopt. In the meantime, my uniform—my poor red coat, which I had first donned with such pride at Rothbury—was concealed or destroyed, and she brought me a hunting-suit of green cloth from the wardrobe of the absent count. Still complete seclusion was necessary, and I could only take air in the evening, on a secluded terrace or upper bartizan of the chateau, where Mademoiselle de Broglie and her attendant frequently sat in a kind of bower formed by the projection of a turret and a mass of wild roses, and where they read, chatted, or worked.

I had the pleasure of spending several evenings with Mademoiselle de Broglie there, and with each of these lovely summer evenings, when the purple shadow of the chateau fell far across the weedy lake, whose waters rippled in opal tints, and when the Druid monolith on the opposite rocks shone like a pillar of flame in the crimson light of the setting sun, it seemed to me that I was becoming less and less anxious about my escape from Bourgneuf, my flight from Brittany, and my return to the army. Why was this ? I asked

my heart, and could only look for an answer in the quiet deep eyes of Jacqueline. Her emerald ring was still on my finger, and as I looked at it again and again, and then on the lovely donor, the words of Charters, when I first showed him the ring on that morning near our camp at Paramé, came back to my memory like a prediction about to be verified.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOVE AND ILLUSION.

ON one of those evenings when Angelique was seated on a tabourette, working with her pretty nimble fingers a piece of lace, and when Jacqueline had tired of reading aloud the travels of the Comte de Caylus, which were then in the zenith of their fame, and had permitted the volume to drop listlessly from her hand, we began to converse on the usual topics, dread of the countess's sudden return, of her discovering me, and the means by which to escape from any Breton seaport to England. Mistrusting her discretion, it was evident that the curé of St. Solidore had not informed her of *his* share in my concealment, or of the circumstance at all, so madam was yet in ignorance.

"Were I once clear of your cruisers from Brest and St. Malo in any boat, however small, I might reach England, or be picked up," said I, heedless that the distance from Portsmouth to Cherbourg alone was seventy-five miles; "most loth am I to trespass further on your kindness."

"Think of what I owe you, my life!" said Made-moiselle de Broglie, and as our hands chanced to touch each other, we both trembled without knowing why.

"I have met with so little kindness in the world, mademoiselle, that there is no chance of my stock of gratitude becoming exhausted. My birthright is that of the disinherited—obscurity, poverty, and mortification," said I, sadly.

"Ah! What is this you tell me?" she exclaimed, turning her fine eyes full upon me.

"My family have made me, as it were, an Ishmael—an outcast from amid them; but they shall find——" I clenched my teeth and paused in the act of saying something bitter, for somehow my cousin Aurora's kind face came to memory. "Ah! Mademoiselle de Broglie, if there was a being in the world to whom I would lay open my whole heart—to whom I would reveal the sad story of my past life, it is to you—you to whom I owe so much."

"Your sad story, do you say?"

"Yes."

"At your years!" she exclaimed, while Angelique relinquished her netting, and her dark eyes dilated as she listened.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"*Ah, mon Dieu!* this is terrible!"

I paused again, for I scarcely knew what to say. Aware that all the armies of Europe had long been teeming with desperate soldiers of Fortune, the exiles of Scotland and Ireland, among whom were the claimants of many attainted titles, from dukedoms and marquisesates, down to simple knighthood, I felt almost ashamed to reveal my real rank, lest she might disbelieve me, and I should thus lose her esteem. I deemed it better to remain as she deemed me, the poor gentleman, the "*simple soldat*."

"Orphaned in my youth, the victim of unmerited

wrong and unjust malevolence in manhood, there is not a human being save my comrades, now I hope in England, far away, to whom my heart clings—not one who cares for me, or for whom I can care——”

“Except me, I pray you, monsieur, except me,” said she, smiling, and with growing colour.

“And *me*,” added Angelique.

I kissed the hand of each, and was replying, “Gratitude for the service I rendered makes you kind, Made-moiselle de Broglie——”

“Gratitude? Well, be it so,” said she, with her dark French eyes so full of expression, that my heart beat quick and wildly.

At such times, was it not strange that Aurora’s image with her soft, bright English beauty always came to memory? Yet what was Aurora Gauntlet to me, or I to her? So I thrust the obtrusive idea—the little romance of the lace handkerchief—aside, and gradually my whole heart became filled with a deep and desperate love for Jacqueline, a love I dared scarcely acknowledge to myself. Instead of replying to her last remark, I again lifted her hand and bent my lip over it; then she immediately rose and left me, followed by Angelique. Had I exhibited too much eagerness—had I offended her? My heart sank at the idea.

Anticipating with hope and fear the morrow, dreaming sadly or tenderly over yesterday, ever communing with himself when alone, and abstracted when with all save one, what a miserable dog is your young lover? When one grows older, and becomes a veteran in the service of King Cupid, one learns to take these matters more quietly, like an old soldier under fire.

“Hope makes us live,” says a writer; it is the secret

spirit that lures us toward the future, to some mysterious time beyond the present. "Hope and sleep," says a proverb, "are the foes of care;" but hope follows the impulses of imagination rather than the convictions of reason, and so hope is the lover's grand ally.

I remained alone on the terrace till the red sun declined beyond the dun, dark mountains, while the breeze of evening rippled the bosom of the reedy lake, and waved the white water-lilies that floated there; nor did I retire to my lurking-place—the pretty room which Angelique had relinquished to me—until the pale crescent moon shone sharply out from amid the deep blue of the south-western sky, and two great ravens, whose eyry was in the rocks, had winged their way across the water, from the girouettes of the chateau, where they were wont to sit and croak for hours. I have more than once seen Angelique sign herself with the cross, on seeing these two ravens, which she assured me were no other than the doomed souls of King Grallon and his daughter—for all the land of Brittany teems with legends of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table.

Did Jacqueline suspect the passion that now preyed upon me? By her knowing smiles, Angelique certainly *did*, and would no doubt inform her of it; then if she deemed me presumptuous, or felt the passion distasteful, would she not at least shun, if she did not expel me from the chateau? But Jacqueline did *neither*, so day after day stole on, until my love for her became a part of my existence, for without her, life seemed so valueless! My passion was tender and true—so tender that I could have worshipped her, and in my secret soul I did so. The most simple

words spoken by Jacqueline—the most casual smile on her lip, dwelt long in my memory and sank deep in my heart. Fancies I have had for others; but this was the passion that seemed to satisfy *every illusion*—to be the love of all loves that a poor human heart could desire; at least I thought so *then*. And so, amid the wild and gloomy scenery around that old and secluded chateau at Bretagne, our companionship ripened from esteem and friendship into love—but oh, what a hopeless passion for both! Her image came ever, unbidden, when she was absent; it pursued me and became a part of myself; and where she was not, what pleasure had I? and as my mind became filled with this new idol, my country, my duty as a loyal subject, my honour as a soldier—liberty, all were forgotten in worshipping Jacqueline. Alas! I was not yet twenty!

Years have come and gone since then, but never shall I forget the joy of the time, when she first sunk on my breast, and whispered in my ear, while her tears fell hot and fast—“Yes, I love you, Basil—oh, I *do* love you! But in what can our passion end, but destruction and despair?”

CHAPTER XXIX.

I BECOME A SOUBRETTE.

AMID all this, we were somewhat flurried, when, one morning in August, Madame de Bourgneuf unexpectedly drove up the long avenue to the gate of the chateau, in her old-fashioned carriage, which resembled a huge game-pie, or an antique tea-caddy on wheels, and brought tidings that the coast, from the Isle

d'Ouessant to Ostend, was more than ever closely watched, as another descent of those insolent heretics, the English, was expected, for the express and envious purpose of demolishing the elegant fortifications erected by Marshal Vauban at Cherbourg, and burning his Most Christian Majesty's fleet, then ignobly blocked up in Brest by the squadrons of Lord Anson, Sir Edward Hawke, and Commodore Howe, who, as an additional insult to France, carried brooms at their mast-heads, in token that they swept the sea!

From the Governor of Brittany she had obtained all this intelligence at St. Malo, and I immediately received it from Angelique, who being somewhat addicted to waggery and mischief, informed me in a whisper, that "although madame, our aunt, had resided so long at St. Malo, ostensibly to pay her devotions at the famous shrine of the cathedral, it was more probably because the Due d'Aiguillon had appointed as Governor and Commandant of St. Malo, the old Comte de Boisguiller—father of the chevalier who, thirty years before, had been madame's most devoted though unsuccessful lover: and now, as both were free, she was not without hope of kindling his passion again—hence the old lady's devotion to the blessed bones of St. Malo; but (added the soubrette, in the words of Jean Jacques Rousseau) who ever heard of a pair of grey-haired lovers sighing for each other?"

Now, what the deuce was to be done with *me*? Madame was very strict about her domestics, and had rather austere views on the subject of men in general and lovers in particular (M. le Commandant excepted), yet, added Angelique, she always prefers as a spiritual

adviser the handsome young Abbé St. Servand to old Père Celestine, of St. Solidore.

Terrified by the prospect of immediate discovery, of my ignominious expulsion, perhaps punishment, poor Jacqueline became quite paralysed, but her spirited abigail rose superior to the occasion, and resolved that a more complete disguise, and an entirely new plan of operations, were at once necessary ; so she insisted that I should become, like herself, a soubrette in the household. Her clever little fingers—for she was neat and ready-handed, as all Frenchwomen are—soon prepared a dress of her own for me, by letting out a tuck or two in the skirts, altering the body and so forth. Then she proceeded at once to have me attired, a feat I could never have performed for myself. She laced me up in a pair of her own stays, a merciless process, which nearly suffocated me, and certainly caused a determination of blood to the head ; “ but it was absolutely necessary,” as she stated, “ that I should have a figure ;” adding, as she fastened the lace, “ in time I shall make you quite pretty, monsieur, and then, if Boisguiller’s hussars come this way, we shall be rivals for the handsome sub-brigadier.”

“ Angelique, how you talk !”

“ But the hussars——”

“ Don’t talk of them, pray. The thought of meeting hussars in this absurd dress makes my blood run cold.”

“ Then, think of mademoiselle. *Ma foi !* a Parisian girl like her required some one to interest, to excite her, amid the gloom of this old chateau, with its big rats and terrible legends, so you came just in time to prevent her dying of *ennui*. But for Jacquot I should have fallen in love with you myself.”

She took great pains with me ; a few false curls adroitly pinned on, and one of her own tall, coif-like Breton caps, of spotless white linen, completed my head gear. She patted my chin, and thanked Heaven I wore neither beard nor moustache ; then I joined her in a hearty fit of laughter, on surveying myself in a mirror.

“What would Jack Charters, Tom Kirkton, or other fellows of ours, say if they could see me thus !” was my first thought.

Angelique taught me how to seat myself, and how to hold myself when seated ; how to spread or gather my skirts when ascending or descending stairs ; and she burst again and again into ringing fits of laughter at the length of ankle I exhibited. At last, after being well drilled, I was taken to the drawing-room, and with a heart that certainly palpitated, and a cheek that blushed truly with shame and ridicule, I was presented to madame, as the new attendant of mademoiselle—a girl from the wild marshes of the Morbihan. My costume was perfect, even to the black velvet necklet, which no Breton girl is ever without.

Jacqueline grew very pale, but a smile twinkled in her tearful dark eyes, when she retired behind the chair of her aunt, who bowed politely, and surveyed me through her eyeglass, as I advanced, courtseying at every second step, my hands folded meekly across my breast, and my eyes cast modestly down, in a manner taught me by that pretty rogue, Angelique. The idea occurred to me that a candid confession of who I was, and the weight of the mutual service Jacqueline and I had rendered each other, would have been better than the adoption of this absurd and most dangerous disguise, which could only serve to complicate

the perils of my present position ; and there was no resource—I was in for it now !

“ Approach, girl,” said the countess, “ come nearer me. You have a very fair skin for a girl from Morbihan.”

“ My mother, madam, was an English woman,” said I, courtseying lower ; to have said a *Scots woman* would have served my purpose better in France, for the countess said, sharply—

“ So much the worse—so much the worse, girl ! You have, however, I hope, been well instructed in all religious duties, and never omit mass or confession.”

“ Mon Père Celestine will answer for me,” said I, confident that the good priest would protect me, whatever came to pass.

“ *Très bien !* I expect him to visit us in a few days, together with the Comte de Boisguiller, Commandant of St. Malo.” (This reply, like a double-headed shot, was not very restoring.) “ But why do you require a *second* attendant, Jacqueline—is not Angelique enough for you ? What is your name ?”

“ Basile, madame, so please you.”

“ Basile what ?”

(The deuce take it ! I had not thought of a name.)

“ Basile Gantelet,” said Angelique, replying for me.

“ Your parents and family ?——”

“ Were poor fisher people, all carried off by the English fleet, and are now in some horrid prison.”

“ The English, as Comte de Boisguiller says, it is always those pestilent English ! we can neither move for them by land or sea. *Très bien !* my good girl, I am pleased with mademoiselle’s choice, and like your modest appearance so much, that I think I shall retain you about my own person. If you please me, I shall

have your ears pierced, and present you with a pair of my own earrings at the next feast of St. Malo."

"Oh, madame, how happy I shall be to attend so dear, so delightful, so handsome a lady!" said I, court-seying thrice, but feeling, nevertheless, in no way delighted by the prospect of the ear-piercing process.

"Adieu, my child," replied the countess, with a gratified smile. "Angelique will instruct you in your new duties; and, as you are from the melancholy district of the Morbihan—the land of salt marshes, and the Montagnes Noires, of old feuds, solemn pilgrimages, and ruined castles, I shall expect you to entertain us with some droll legends of especially those wicked little fiends the Courils and Torrigans, who infest the roads at nightfall, and make travellers dance till they die of fatigue."

Angelique hurried me away; our interview had been most successful! Madame de Bourgneuf was now in her sixtieth year. Few women, even in blooming England, are charming at that age; but in France they are frequently horrible! She could never have been beautiful at any time, and though her hazel eyes were large and bright, her shrivelled skin had the hue of an old drumhead, that had undergone the rain and marches of three campaigns; yet, strange to say, she bore a resemblance to her beautiful niece, which made me ask tremulously in my heart, would Jacqueline ever become so plain, even if she lived to the years of old Parr?

The countess had a profusion of real and false hair, all of snowy whiteness, always dressed *à la Marquise*, and by her ornaments, and general style of attire, it was evident that she knew not the art of growing gracefully old; but was resolved to be young, and to

keep her colours flying to the last. With all this, she was a perfect repertory of old stories of the court of France, legends of the saints, and historic memories of Brittany.

I soon found that my new attire entailed upon me many annoyances. I strove to avoid all the domestics of the chateau ; but the jealousy and curiosity of the women to see and to converse with the new comer—this wonderful *paysanne* of the Morbihan, who was constantly with their young mistress, who could sketch in her album, and knew *when* to turn over the leaves of her music when she played—together with the delicate attentions paid to me by Urbain the gardener, Bertrand the porter, the valets and the coachman, became so alarming that I could scarcely quit Jacqueline's suite of apartments, or leave the chateau alone for a moment. To all, I was a puzzle ! Some said I was a clumsy Norman—a phlegmatic Fleming—a Navarrese ; the men declared my bearing odd ; the women, my accent to be more so ; but the gardener, with his bouquets, was an admirer so devoted, that I dared never venture into the garden, or into the avenue, when he was clipping the yews, or tending his orange tubs. Then judge of my alarm when one day the mischievous Angelique, with her black eyebrows arched to the roots of her hair, her large eyes dilated with mock dismay, and a smile of drollery on her rosy mouth, began thus—

“ Oh, Mademoiselle Basile—oh, how unfortunate you are !”

“ What has happened ?” I exclaimed.

“ Madame has conceived a greater fancy for you than ever !”

“ Indeed !” said I, drily, while smoothing my front

hair, before a glass; "then I suppose she is going to have my ears pierced at last?"

"*Ma foi!* what do you think? as she is too much afraid of ghosts to repose alone, you must take the place of mademoiselle and me."

"What! ridiculous—I shall sell out—resign—desert from the chateau!" I exclaimed, while ready to sink with alarm and anger, until the wicked wag who had invented the whole story, burst out into a fit of laughter at the dreary expression of my face.

CHAPTER XXX.

HAUTOIS.

THE absurdity and annoyance entailed by my new character, together with the study and trouble it cost me to play such a part, would have been intolerable but for the facilities it afforded me of enjoying with perfect freedom the society of Jacqueline. Thus, together we could ramble for hours, in the shady walks of the garden, and the green leafy turnings of the labyrinth, or sit in the bowers of fragrant roses, which were trained, trimmed, and cultured by my admirer, the gardener, whose name, I shall long remember, was Urbain. In the labyrinth we lost ourselves so often that the countess one day, somewhat to the confusion of poor Jacqueline, named it the *Val sans retour*, after that in the Breton forest of Broceliande—a mysterious path out of which no false or fickle lover can ever return, for there the fairies raise up an impenetrable and impassable barrier. In that forest, too, say the legends, lies the tomb of Myrddyna, beneath a fatal and enchanted stone.

If the curé of St. Solidore actually paid madame the visit she spoke of, discovery was certain. I did not fear the good man much, save a severe rebuke for conduct that was unseemly ; but then there was that devil of a commandant coming also from St. Malo, and already in anticipation I felt myself a prisoner in its dreary casemates that overhung the sea ! This idea filled Jacqueline with terror.

"Give me up and leave me," said she, with hands clasped upon her forehead, while her tears fell fast. "To what end do we love each other, Basil ?"

"True, Jacqueline—to what end indeed ! But to give you up is impossible. To love you has become a part of my nature, my existence—myself ; and being with you daily, has made that which was a passion, a confirmed habit."

"In mercy do not speak thus ; I love you—love you dearly ; yet our marriage is impossible, and I can see no future but despair."

"I know it," said I, gloomily, and with clenched teeth. "Cursed be the fate that threw us together—the folly that kept me lingering here."

"Better would it have been that we had never met."

"That I had never rescued you, do you mean ?"

"Or I you ?" she would exclaim with a sad smile ; and then a long, long kiss would close these interviews of mingled passion, joy, and pain.

One evening, after escorting Jacqueline to the door of the chateau, instead of entering with her I returned to the garden, for the purpose of dreaming over all that had passed between us, and also considering seriously the future, and what could be the end of a love so rash and desperate as ours. Twilight had set

in, and from the garden I issued to the long avenue that led to the Rennes-road. It was dark and gloomy, and the clipped yews assumed all kinds of quaint and terrible forms. While loitering there, I became conscious that a man was observing me from behind one of the orange-tubs, one of which, I have said, stood between each of the yews. Having no desire to meet any one, I was turning off hastily towards the chateau, when suddenly the lurker stepped before me, saying—*"Pardieu, my pretty one, it seems that he you wait for is not likely to come. Permit me to offer you my arm."*

He was a tall, swinging fellow of a repulsive aspect, with a long knife in his belt and a broad hat slouched over his gloomy eyes.

"Stand back, monsieur," said I, firmly; "back, or it may be the worse for you. I am one of the household of Madame la Comtesse de Bourgneuf."

"I know that well enough; but don't be alarmed, my fair one—I am only a sportsman."

"Then permit me to pass."

"*Oui*—but I am a sportsman who looks for better game than a clumsy soubrette," said the fellow, whom I now perceived to be tipsy.

"Indeed, monsieur."

"*Vraiment*—perhaps Mademoiselle de Broglie herself. Does she often promenade here in the evening?"

Gathering my skirts up to my knees, as they sorely impeded me, I was running quickly away, encumbered by my stays and the paddings with which Angelique in her zeal had furnished them, when this man, who was both strong and active, overtook and confronted me again.

"Stop—speak!" he thundered out with a strange

oath which I had somewhere heard before. "*Pardieu*, my saucy one, I shall teach you that I have not dragged a chain in the casemates of St. Malo, and at the aqueducts of Dol, for nothing."

"You are——" said I, gasping.

"Theophile Hautois," said he, closing the question.

I was thunderstruck, and the memory of Captain Brook, of the outrage he had contemplated with regard to Jacqueline, and my own narrow escape from his deadly *couteau de chasse*, flashed at once upon my memory. I was unarmed, defenceless, and sadly encumbered by my new costume, though at the same time it effectually disguised me. I paused for a moment to recover my breath, and then concentrating all my strength and fury in one decisive blow, dealt fairly between the eyes, I knocked the ponderous ruffian down like a nine-pin, and, darting off towards the chateau, reached the vestibule in a state so breathless and excited, that any one who saw me would have deemed me a most timid and gentle woman in reality. What Master Hautois thought, on receiving such a knock on the head from a fair hand, it may be difficult to conceive; but I saw no more of him for some time, nor could he be found, though the whole of the grounds were immediately and rigorously searched by Urbain and a party of armed men. That this daring outlaw should prowl so near the chateau filled Jacqueline and her maid with the greatest alarm; and for myself, I took the precaution to carry about with me a small pistol, the charge of which I frequently renewed.

In the boudoir of the countess (a charming little circular chamber which opened off the drawing-room, and was entirely hung with rose-coloured silk, and had long windows which overlooked the garden and

labyrinth), I was detailing to her my adventure in the avenue, and was also employed in the manly occupation of winding a skein of silk for some piece of work which her niece and Angelique were manufacturing for the cathedral of St. Malo, when the countess said to me, "Basile, my child, you look very sad."

"Do I seem so, madame?"

"Yes," she continued, surveying me through her glass—a process which always made me wince; "I can read a sad expression in your eyes."

"It may be so, madame, there are few hearts without some hidden sorrow—some veiled secret."

"But you are so young! Ah! I see, you are in love!"

"It may be so," said I again, with a furtive glance at Jacqueline, near whom I was kneeling, and who grew pale as her aunt spoke.

"With some one far away?"

"Do not press me, madame; suffice that it is a mad and almost hopeless love—hopeless as regards its future," said I, bitterly, while Jacqueline gave me a secret and imploring glance. "I love, madam, how dearly and how deeply, is known only to Heaven and myself. There, that is my secret—that my hidden sorrow and joy—joy for the delight it gives me, and sorrow for its future."

The face of Jacqueline beamed with pleasure, and her eyes sparkled as she bent her flushed face over her needlework.

"I would that M. Jacquot would speak thus of me," said Angelique. "I shall pull his ears some day, till he does so."

The old lady politely asked pardon of me for her curiosity, and was proceeding to detail some of her

own early experiences and to rehearse the number of Counts, Abbés, Chevaliers, and Grand Crosses of St. Louis, who had sighed and died for her, when a servant suddenly announced "the Chevalier de Boisguiller;" then we heard the clank of a sabre with the jingle of spurs, and that gay hussar in his brilliant uniform, all gold braid and bell buttons, with his fur cap in one hand, and the other caressing his dearly-cherished moustache, entered, bowing and smiling to us all. He was *en route*, he said, with his troop, from Rennes to the coast, and as he would pass near St. Malo, he had galloped on in front to pay his respects at the chateau, and obtain the honour of conveying any message for his father, the commandant, from the Countess Ninon—one who far excelled the Ninon of the preceding age.

There was mischief lurking in the handsome fellow's eyes as he said all this. He soon detected an impudent smile on the lips of Angelique, and, ere long, I found him eyeing me sharply through his glass, and I felt a horrible dread lest *he* should recognise me, or discover my sex. I was certain the crisis had come, when the hussar captain said—

"By-the-by, my dear mademoiselle, what did you make of the Englishman, whose life you saved from my fellows, when we were last here?"

"The young man who saved my life from Hautois?" asked Jacqueline, slowly.

"Yes; 'twas turn about, it would seem."

"Monsieur le Chevalier, he was taken to St. Malo," said Angelique, who came to the rescue of her mistress.

"And since then, my girl?"

"We have heard no more of him."

"'Tis well," said the chevalier, who, as his eye chanced again to fall on me, caused my heart to swell alternately with alarm and anger. "Those English folks are about to pay us a visit again."

"Again—*O mon Dieu !*" we all exclaimed together.

"More shipping and troops are being concentrated at their rendezvous of both Portsmouth and Plymouth," said he, while playing with the gold tassels of the cord which held the furred pelisse on his left shoulder ; "but my father is ready for them at St. Malo, and Brest and Cherbourg are in excellent hands."

Though reflection or thought evidently but seldom troubled our hussar, he now proceeded to make some remarks with which I, mentally, coincided.

"*Parbleu !* what did the King of Great Britain propose to gain by invading France with a force of about twelve thousand men ? He takes a town or so, which he cannot keep—he effects a landing under great difficulties on our most dangerous coast, and lands only to embark again."

"The British did not invade France with the hope of conquest," said Jacqueline ; "but to harass us and destroy our arsenals it would appear."

"Well, fair cousin, it may be so ; but as the Due de Marlborough is not like his namesake who fought against the Grande Monarque, I don't believe our courtiers at Paris or Versailles were very much alarmed by this recent landing of a handful of British at Cancalle Bay. At Versailles, they quite laughed at the idea of John Bull's vast armament to burn some fifteen or twenty old crazy hulks at St. Solidore."

"Fifteen or twenty, monsieur," said I, with unwise pique ; "I thought the British destroyed eighty-six

vessels of all kinds, and sank or destroyed two hundred and thirty-four pieces of cannon."

"*Peste!* you are well informed, my fair soubrette," said the captain, fixing his glass in his eye, and giving me a steady stare, while Jacqueline looked at me imploringly, and with intense alarm.

"Peace, Basile," said the countess, severely.

"But so many troops are now entering Brittany from all points," resumed the chevalier, "to strengthen the hands of the Duc d'Aiguillon, that I don't think our island neighbours will be so rash as to visit us again."

Kettledrums were now heard in the distance. I felt my cheek flush—my ears tingle at the sound; and when I looked up from my skein of silk, the keen eyes of Boisguiller were still regarding me.

"Already I must tear myself away, countess," said he, rising; "my troop will be here immediately."

"Why not halt for a time?"

"Nay, madame, a hundred men and horses are too many to trespass on your generosity, as our advanced party did before. Adieu, mademoiselle!" said he, kissing the hand of Jacqueline with a tenderness that certainly was *not* bestowed upon the yellow fingers of the Aunt Ninon; "adieu, pretty Angelique—and you, what is your name, mademoiselle?"

"Basile."

"Have you any tender messages for the Queen's Own Hussars? Believe me, girls, you are both too pretty to become the helpmates of charcoal-burners, and Breton woodcutters; so think of *us* sometimes." Then with a low bow the chevalier pirouetted out of the room, and my heart beat more freely when I heard his horse galloping down the avenue.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BOUDOIR.

FROM a window I saw the hussars defiling by threes—past the end of the long and stately avenue of yews—along the road that led from Rennes. I heard the patter of the kettle drums, and saw the glittering sabres, the rich uniforms, the waving plumes, the braided pelisses, the gaudy housings of the horses, the sky-blue standard with the three *fleurs de lys*, that waved in the centre of the troop; and my heart swelled with proud and regretful emotions, as I thought of my present absurd and dangerous position, of my absent comrades—the lads who boasted themselves “second to none,” and with whom I had twice ridden sword in hand, through the ranks of Boisguiller’s Hussars.

That the chevalier was an ardent admirer of Jacqueline I perceived but too plainly; yet I did not dread him much as a rival, especially as the Catholic Church will not—unless in very particular instances—permit the marriage of cousins, and they were both within the forbidden degrees. But I dreaded his discovering me—his probable revenge for the insult implied by my residence so near his cousin; and yet this chevalier was a handsome, brave, and gallant fellow. I was roused from my reverie by a soft hand that was laid caressingly on mine. I turned, and met the pretty face and dark eyes of Angelique.

“Twice, monsieur,” said she, “I thought our rog of a chevalier had discovered you; what eyes he has

“Tell me, Angelique: this chevalier, who was anxious to have me knocked on the head when I fi came here, docs he—does he——”

"What, kiss me occasionally? Of course, every one does so sometimes—that is, except you."

"I can soon make amends for this unpardonable omission."

"That will do ; *one* is enough, in that dress especially. Well?"

"Does he love your mistress?"

"He is her cousin. Of course he loves her."

"The devil!"

"But every one does."

"Does she love him?"

"Can *you* ask me that?" said the Breton girl, turning on me with her black eyes flashing.

I was silent, for I now knew that the prudent Angelique was completely the mistress of our dangerous secret.

"Well has propinquity done its work!" thought I.

I found the Countess Ninon very amusing (though fond of recurring with sorrowful recollections to her first love, a Scottish captain in the Irish Dragoons of Lord Clare, who had fallen in battle somewhere); and notwithstanding the little vanities incident to her years, sex, and country, her conversation was instructive. Thus while attending her and her niece in their walks, &c., I listened with pleasure to her anecdotes of the court of Louis XIV., and even that of Louis XIII., which she had gleaned from her mother.

At night when the perfumed wax candles were lighted in her boudoir, and I was busy with my skeins of silk, while she and Angelique plied their needles on the embroidery for that Right Reverend Father, the Bishop of St. Malo, she would tell us many a strange old story of the Breton wars between Guy of Thouars and Philip Augustus; of the enchanted sea-ducks

that were neither fish nor flesh, but grew between the planks of ships that sailed in Breton waters ; of the toad-stones that were found in the mountains, and proved a sovereign remedy for all manner of poisons ; of the terrors of the black forest of Hunandaye ; of the buried cities of Is and Douarnenez ; of the ghosts that shrieked in the ancient vaults that lie between Rieux and Redon, and the subterranean torrent of St. Aubyn du Cormier. She knew also many strange and wild legends of the great stones that stud all the land so thickly from Lorient to Quiberon—rising out of lonely heaths that are covered with holly and thistles, like that great block which marks, near Morlaix, where a peasant was devoured by the Moon, for blaspheming her. She told of the dreadful shipwrecks the point of Raz had witnessed ; of the Bay of the Dead, and the Island of Sein, a melancholy sand-holme, whereon neither grass nor trees will grow, and which was, of old, the abode of Celtic witches, who sold fair winds or foul to the Breton mariners. I remember being particularly struck with a strange story which she related of the famous Ninon de l'Enelos, who is said to have preserved her beauty until she numbered ninety years.

We were seated in her boudoir. It was the fourth evening of my obnoxious masquerading. The eternal piece of embroidery for the bishop was finished at last, and Angelique was busy with the soft, silky, and luxuriant black hair of Jacqueline, which she had unloosed, and was pinning up for the night, before a large mirror, while I sat on a *tabourette*, at some distance, contemplating with secret joy and admiration the beauty of one I loved so much, and envying her *soubrette* a service which I could neither imitate nor

perform. It would seem as if the beautiful girl felt some coquettish joy in the contemplation of herself, for after a pause she said to her aunt—

“Tell me honestly, my dear aunt, am I as pretty as you could wish?”

“Quite so, Jacqueline.”

“And *you*, Basile?”

I could only clasp my hands in silence.

“Yet,” resumed Madame, “you are not half so pretty as I was at the same age.”

“When Milord Clare’s Irish dragoons lay at Versailles?” said Jacqueline, quickly adding, “of course not, dear aunt; I could not hope to excel you. The old Comte Boisguiller is always polite enough to tell me so.”

“Does he indeed? Dear M. le Comte!” said Madame, applying a gold vinaigrette to her nose to conceal a gratified smile. “You are charming Jacqueline. But remember that faces which are pretty in youth often become hideous in age.”

“You were beautiful, aunt?”

“Like yourself, Jacqueline. When Lord Clare’s——”

“I do not care; I shall marry when young and lovely, and when old and hideous my husband cannot put me away.”

“But he may love some one else.”

Jacqueline glanced at me coquettishly between the masses that overhung her face, and her smile made my heart beat lightly and joyously.

“Oh, to be like Ninon de l’Enclos,” said she; “always lovely!”

“Always?”

“Yes, dear aunt.”

“Do you know the true, the terribly story of the

reckless woman you speak of ?" asked the countess, gravely.

"No ; does it convey a moral ?"

"A most severe one ; shall I tell it you ?"

"If you please, dear aunt, and if it is not too dreadful," replied Jacqueline, as she ran her slender white fingers through the masses of dark hair that overhung her shoulders.

Then without further preamble, the garrulous old countess commenced the following narrative, which, to say truth, I thought a very strange one ; but the subject of it was the bosom-friend of Madame de Maintenon, of the Marquise de Sévigné, and moved in the best society of the very singular Paris of her day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

STORY OF NINON DE L'ENCLOS.

NINON, I have said, had lovers when verging on her ninetieth year ! Whence came this mystery ? Like Poppæa Sabina, the second wife of Nero, Ninon is averred to have preserved her wondrous beauty unimpaired to extreme old age, by using baths of asses' milk ; but it was neither these, nor the famous cosmetic, so long known among our Parisian belles as *Crème de l'Enclos*, the component parts of which are milk, lemon-juice and brandy, which preserved the dazzling complexion and delicate skin of Ninon for so many years untouched by time ; but a spell wrought upon her by the great master of evil, whom she served throughout a long and wasted life.

It would seem as if Time, the destroyer of all things, failed to impair the charms of Ninon, at least entirely,

for he could not deprive her of her marvellous power to win and seduce; thus, at her age of ninety, does not the Abbé Chaulieu say? "that Cupid had retreated even into the lines of her forehead." Hence in age she was worshipped for her beauty, by the *grandsons* of those who had loved her in the bloom of her youth!

Ninon was born at Paris in May, 1616, during the reign of Louis XIII. Her father was a gallant, but dissipated gentleman of Touraine, who had fought in the battles of Henry the Great. Her mother was Mademoiselle de Raconis, a lady of Orleans, from whom she inherited her beauty and gaiety of disposition. Monsieur de l'Enclos was passionately fond of music, and inspired his daughter with the same taste, so that in girlhood she became mistress of the lute, the harp, and guitar; but Madame de l'Enclos, who destined her for a convent, was averse to such accomplishments as frivolities, and was careful to take her daughter to Notre Dame twice daily—that is, to morning mass and to evening vespers; but little Ninon always substituted for her missal some little volume of poetry, or a romance which she read under her veil, as she knelt before the altar, thus her responses were often very odd ones. Before she was ten years of age she had all Charron and Montaigne by heart, and spoke with fluency the Spanish and Italian languages. In her fifteenth year, the death of her parents left Ninon the mistress of her own actions, with a fortune of ten thousand livres per annum. Her loveliness was then divine! Her form was finely proportioned, her complexion singularly delicate; her face was a fine oval, and long dark lashes with drooping lids gave a charming softness to her sparkling hazel eyes. Her hair was a rich golden brown, and fell about her neck in wavy

profusion. Her little nostrils, her rosy mouth and chin were perfect ! In temper she was at times violent and imperious, and her disposition had this peculiarity, that while even eager and lively about trifles that affected herself, she was too often carelessly cold and selfishly indifferent about all that concerned others. She was born to be a coquette, and the spirit of gallantry, with the desire to charm, win and enslave, pervaded her whole existence. She was the centre of Parisian fashion ; lovers she had in plenty, and if she desired to marry, some of the proudest titles in France were at her disposal ; but Ninon, whom her mother had destined for the service of God, preferred a life of perfect freedom—such freedom as the days of Louis “ the Just ” permitted, with independence and intrigue—to live, not for others, but for herself alone. We shall see how all this ended.

One night in the year 1633, she was seated alone in a room of her house in the Rue de Parlement, behind the Palais Royal. Her lovers, the Counts de Coligné and Jersey, and her favourite friends, the Comtesse de la Suze, D’Olonne, and the Duchesse de Bouillon—Mancini, the cripple Abbé Scarron, M. de Sévigné, and others, had all retired and departed in their carriages or sedans, and Ninon was now seated before a mirror in that famous boudoir, the walls of which, as history tells us, were decorated with frescoes, that illustrated the story of Cupid and Psyche. Ninon was now only in her seventeenth year. She observed that she was very pale, that her round cheeks were colourless, and some remarks made by the Abbé Scarron on the decay of youth, the fading of beauty, the gradual advance of years, made the young girl thoughtful ; and she was too intelligent and too well-read to be without

reflection, so she thought of the *future* with forebodings, for already had late hours and gaiety robbed her of her roses. Arrayed for conquest, who at that time could have competed with Ninon? Round her slender neck she wore the *collet-monti*, or standing collar, which disappeared with Louis XIV; her fine hair was delicately sprinkled with perfumed maréchal powder; a kissing-patch, like a tiny star, was in one of the dimples at the corner of her rosy mouth, and her robe of silver gauze was looped in ample festoons, to display the petticoat of crimson brocade beneath. Would a time ever come when she would be covered with wrinkles, like the Comtesse de la Suze, or when her most passionate lover, the gay young English Count of Jersey* would weary of her? Oh, *mon Dieu!* it was not to be thought of with patience. At that moment Guillot, her valet, tapped at the door of her boudoir.

"Who is there?" she asked, impatiently.

"A stranger, who would speak with you, mademoiselle," replied Guillot.

"A stranger, and at this hour! What is his name?"

"He declines to give it."

"Ridiculous! Is he armed?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"Is he young or handsome?"

"No, mademoiselle; he is very old and shabbily dressed."

"Then say I am ill, weary, busy, engaged with company, or what you please, Guillot; only do not trouble me with him."

The valet bowed and retired, but soon returned.

* William Villiers, Viscount Grandison, then known in France by that title.

"He says, mademoiselle, that he knows you are alone, that you are neither ill, nor weary, nor busy, for which reason he has chosen to visit you at present. That he has come from a long distance, and has a secret of vast importance to communicate to you."

"A pertinacious old fool !" muttered Ninon ; "but admit him."

The stranger entered, and with a cunning leer in his eyes surveyed the chamber, particularly the frescoes of Cupid and Psyche, and then they rested on Ninon, who for a moment, she knew not why, felt the young blood curdle in her heart beneath his sparkling glance. Her visitor was a little, decrepit old man with shrunken limbs. His coat and breeches, "a world too wide," were of black serge, and large black japanned buckles covered three-fourths of his shoes. He wore a high conical hat with a very narrow brim. This he removed on entering, but still retained on his head an old-fashioned calotte cap of black velvet, the lap-pets of which hung down by his withered cheeks. His appearance betokened extreme old age, but one that was healthy and vigorous withal ; for his eyes, which glittered and sometimes *glared* through his black horn spectacles, were wondrously large, keen, and bright ; and his hair, instead of being grey or thin, was stuffed in masses, coal-black and coarse, under the calotte cap.

"Good evening, my dear Mademoiselle de L'Enclos," said this singular little personage, with a blunt and familiar, but smiling nod.

"It is almost morning, monsieur," replied Ninon, with petulance ; "the clock of the Palais Royal has just struck midnight, so pray what is your business with me at such an hour?"

"That you shall learn, mademoiselle, when your valet retires, but not till then," replied the little man, with a withering glance at Guillot.

Ninon was somewhat alarmed on hearing this; but being impelled by an irresistible power, she made a sign to the wondering valet, who withdrew and closed the door. Then the quaint old man immediately opened it, and on finding that Guillot lingered with an ear at the keyhole, he gave him a glance so piercing, that he retired with considerable precipitation.

"Now, monsieur, your business," said Ninon.

"Were I young and handsome, like the Count de Jersey, perchance you would be less impatient," replied the impudent old man, with a horrible grin, while applying the forefinger of his right hand to the side of his hooked nose, and winking one of his wicked eyes; "yet confess, my beauty, that your heart sinks when you look on me?"

"It does," murmured Ninon, who felt, she knew not why, on the verge of fainting, and fascinated by the dark stranger's glittering eyes.

"Be not alarmed," he resumed blandly, and with an expression in those serpentlike orbs that was *not* a smile; you have nothing to fear from me—as yet."

"As yet!" repeated Ninon, breathlessly.

"Listen, mademoiselle," said he, striking his long silver-headed cane on the floor; "you see before you one whom all mankind—yea, and womankind, too—obey and fear; one whom Nature hath endowed with the rare power of dispensing wondrous gifts. I was present at your birth——"

"You?"

"I; and from that hour I have watched your career sedulously, and with satisfaction, though unseen."

"This is folly or raving !" exclaimed Ninon, gathering courage, and stretching out her beautiful hand towards a bell ; but a sharp, fierce glance from the old man's great goggle eyes restrained her, and she said, gently, "What is your object ?"

"To inquire what lot you wish for yourself in life."

"My present one is brilliant enough. I have an income of ten thousand livres, a house here in Paris, another at the Cordeliers, a circle of delightful friends, and lovers in plenty."

"Friends change and lovers too ; beauty fades, youth becomes age, and age becomes wearisome and hideous."

"True ; but I am only seventeen—for seventeen years more, at least, I shall be beautiful."

"You will then be four-and-thirty, mademoiselle, when beauty begins to fade and the ripe bloom of youth is past. Then old age *will* come, and that is what my friend De la Rochefoucault terms 'the *hell* of women.'"

"Your object, I repeat, monsieur ?" asked Ninon, glancing at the clock and yawning without disguise.

"I come to give you the choice of three gifts ; firstly, the highest honours in France ; secondly, splendid wealth ; and thirdly, eternal beauty. The world does not possess another being who could make you the same offers as I."

"You are either a quack or a fool," said Ninon, imperiously, as she laid her hand on the bell to summon Guillot ; but again the great eyes of the quaint old man daunted her.

"Choose," said he, emphatically ; "I have no time for trifling ; rank, wealth, or a beauty that shall endure without change for four score years at least."

"Then give me the latter—eternal beauty, that I

may have lovers and adorers for ever," said Ninon, laughing; "but pray, my dear old man, how is such a gift to be acquired?"

"By yourself, mademoiselle; it is very simple. Write your name with your own lovely hand, in this book; swear to me secrecy for life, and the thing is done."

He bowed, and advancing, laid before her a very handsome pocket-book, bound in scarlet and richly gilt.

Ninon, heedless of the matter, and neither believing in, nor caring for his assumed powers, laughingly gave the promise he required, and wrote her name in his tablets, which he instantly closed, and consigned to his deep breeches pocket.

"Now, mademoiselle," said the little man, with a chuckle and a grimace, as he waved his hands towards her, "receive the power of possessing eternal beauty, the power of controlling every heart, and being beloved for long, long years, after all who know and love you now are consigned to the silent tomb."

"*All?*" said Ninon, almost sadly, as she thought of the Count de Jersey, while a strange thrill passed over all her body, and a sensation like the pricking of needles. Recovering herself, however, she said, with a pouting lip, "Monsieur, you jest."

"That is not my habit," responded the old man with a wicked grin; "but when I *do* jest, few laugh at me, even in Paris, which I can remember when celebrated for the extreme gravity of its inhabitants."

"When was this?"

"In the days of my friend Julian the apostate, who says, in his amusing book, the '*Misopogon*,' that he loves our dear Parisians on account of their *gravity*."

"Who are you that say such things, and pretend to so much power?" asked Ninon, with displeasure.

"I am one who has known this lower world, its heartlessness and trickery, its crooked ways and its wickedness, for exactly six thousand years, six months, fourteen days, eleven hours, and fifty-five minutes—the clock of the Palais Royal is ten minutes fast, mademoiselle. Adieu! I shall keep faith with you. Your beauty shall last as I have said, and we shall meet *twice* again."

"When?"

"Once at your house of the Cordeliers, and again in Paris, during the next century."

"The *next* century!" repeated Ninon, with a laugh; "and this is but 1633."

"Exactly—adieu, mademoiselle," and placing his conical hat jauntily on one side of his moplike head of coarse black hair, the old man put his cane under his arm and bowed himself out.

How the enchanting Ninon slept that night we have no means of knowing. In the morning she would have deemed the whole affair a dream, but for the solemn and reiterated assertions of her valet, who had ushered in the nocturnal visitor; and a dream she might ultimately have thought it, had she not found that, beyond all doubt, as years rolled on, as her young companions became old, faded, and withered, and were gathered to the tomb, she still remained youthful, blooming, full of health and spirit, and the possessor of unimpaired loveliness.

The Count de Jersey joined King Charles I., and died in 1643 of a wound received at the siege of Bristol. But the heartless Ninon soon forgot him, and others supplied his place.

Louis XIII. and Cardinal Richelieu were taken to their last home; Louis XIV succeeded—the Augustan age of France—the age which gave her such soldiers as Turenne and Condé, such literati as Racine, Corneille, and Molière, such orators as Massillon, Bossuet, and Lamothe Fénelon, and which saw the exiled Stuarts repining at St. Germain; but still Ninon was young and lovely. She sedulously cultivated the fashions of each age, and wore the extreme of the mode, from the starched ruff of Louis the Thirteenth's time to the *coiffure à la giraffe*—the towering head-dresses of the early part of the eighteenth century.

As Le Sage says of Donna Inesilla (under which name he introduces Ninon in his novel of "Gil Blas"), "she had been idolized by the noblemen of the old court, and saw herself adored by those of the new. Time, that spares not even beauty, had exerted itself upon hers in vain; he could not deprive her of the power to please, and a noble air, an enchanting wit, and graces that were peculiar to her, made her inspire men with passion, even in her old age."

So was it with Ninon, save that her beauty never decayed. In her fifty-sixth year she was residing in her little country villa at the Cordeliers. It was delightfully situated, and was surrounded by a beautiful landscape, and there she usually spent the months of summer. During this year she had also spent the autumn there, to avoid a young cavalier, who had followed her constantly about the streets and public places of Paris, and whose attentions thus had caused her serious annoyance—all the more, perhaps, that the young man seemed somewhat poor, though very handsome and extremely well-bred.

One evening Ninon was alone. She was reading

"*Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*," under which name her father's comrade, the gay *Maréchal Duc de Bassompierre*, narrated some of the love affairs of *Henri Quatre*, when her page, the grandson of *Guillot*, announced that a gentleman in black, who would not give his name, desired to speak with her. She instantly thought of the mysterious visitor of 1633, and tremblingly said that he might be admitted. Contrary to her expectation, there entered a very handsome young man, about four-and-twenty years of age, dressed in a black velvet suit, slashed with white satin, and wearing a steel-hilted rapier slung in a white silk scarf. He knelt before her, and the volume of *Bassompierre* fell from her hand when she recognised the unknown lover who had followed her like her shadow about the streets of Paris.

"Monsieur," said she, "you weary me! What is the object of your visit—and what is your name?"

"Mademoiselle," said he, in trembling accents, and with a flushing cheek, "I am the Chevalier Guillaume de Villiers."

At this name Ninon started and grew deadly pale.

"A lieutenant in the regiment of Artois?" she asked.

"The same, madame; but how know you that?"

"It matters not how; but proceed."

"I was severely wounded when Turenne forced the Spanish lines at Arras, and again on our retreat from Valenciennes, by the ball of an arquebuss. The Viscount sent me on leave to Paris. There I saw you, mademoiselle, and have dared to—to love you in secret—to love you passionately!"

Ninon, who had been regarding the speaker with mournful interest, now arose and sprang back in dismay; for this Chevalier de Villiers—this handsome

young man, so pale, so sad, and gentle-eyed, was no other than her own son, whom since his birth she had secluded in the provinces; who never knew either his mother, or his father—the Count de Jersey; and who now by a strange fatality, in ignorance of their relationship, had fallen madly in love with her! Then followed that terrible episode which is so powerfully reproduced in “Gil Blas.”

Perceiving her confusion, and being dazzled by her marvellous beauty, the young officer took her hands in his, and covered them with kisses; but Ninon started back, and exclaimed—“Beware, rash boy, and listen to me!” Then pointing to the clock on the mantelpiece, she added, “Look there! at this very house, four-and-twenty years ago, I was secretly delivered of you, Guillaume de Villiers, in this very chamber. *I am your mother!*”*

Abashed and terrified, filled with mortification and shame—after a terrible pause—the young man drew his long rapier; and ere Ninon could conceive or arrest his purpose, he placed the hilt on the floor, and sprung upon the blade, which passed through his heart, and killed him on the spot.

Inspired with horror by this sudden catastrophe, Ninon clung to the mantelpiece; but a loud chuckling laugh made her look up,—and lo! At one of the open windows of her chamber there stood a little old man clad in sad-coloured garments of an antique fashion; his shock-head of black hair was surmounted by a conical hat, which he waggishly wore very much on one side, and he was sucking the silver knob of his

* This episode is mentioned in the “Memoirs of Ninon de l’Enclos,” 2 vols.; published in 1776. The story of her compact with Satan is an old legend of Paris.

cane. Through his round horn spectacles his eyes glared on Ninon with a malignant smile she had no difficulty in remembering. He made her a low ironical bow, and hobbled away with another chuckling laugh which made her blood curdle. Her lively nature survived even this shock ! She returned to her house near the Palais Royal, and amid the gaities of Paris, and her circle of friends and admirers, among whom were some of the greatest wits in Paris, such as Rochefoucault, St. Evremont, La Bruyere, and others—a circle that was ever being renewed, she soon forgot the doubly horrid episode of her house at the Cordeliers.

Christina, Queen of Sweden, became one of her friends when at Paris, and was so charmed by her conversation that at parting she declared to the whole court that she had “never met with any woman in France to compare with the illustrious Ninon.” The latter was in her sixty-fifth year when the famous General Sir John Banier (the comrade of Gustavus Adolphus), who fought at Magdeburg and Leipzig, threw himself at her feet, as the poor Chevalier de Villiers and many more had done ; but Ninon only laughed, and said—“My dear general, you will find that it requires more genius to make love than to make war.”

So time passed on, and as I have said, at the age of fourscore Ninon was still to all appearance young, and so charming, that the Abbé Gedeine, a youth of twenty, who had fluttered about her house in the Rue de Parlement, became madly in love with her ; but Ninon was tiring now of lovers, and even of life itself.

“Ah, Ninon,” said the abbé, “love has too long been alike your amusement and your occupation.”

"My dear abbé," she replied, "the most brief follies are the best. I perceive now, when it is somewhat too late, that it was an absurd step in me to accept of you as an admirer. Let us carry the frolic no farther, but fairly quit each other this instant; and for the term of our natural lives."

Thus, after inspiring a youth of twenty with a real passion for her, was Ninon, in her eightieth year, the first to break off from him. In short, from her first boy-lover, the Count de Coligni, when she was only seventeen, to the advent of the Abbé Gedoine, her long life had been a succession of conquests.

In the first days of October, 1706, an illness of a kind so peculiar that it baffled the best physicians in Paris—a languor, wasting and helplessness fell upon Ninon, but amid it she looked lovelier than ever, though she was then ninety years and five months old! In succession had the doctors come and gone, surprised and bewildered by a malady for which they had neither a name nor a remedy. At last there came *one* whom no one knew, and who requested to see Ninon alone. He was a decrepit, but hale little man, very old apparently, though his hair was coal-black. He wore a dark suit, an absurd conical hat, and large horn spectacles, and leaned on a silver-headed cane, which at every pace he planted firmly on the pavement, as if he had a very good opinion of himself. In his left hand he carried a pocket-book of scarlet morocco, richly gilt—doubtless his book of pharmacy. Propped upon a pillow, the dying Ninon—for she *was* dying now—regarded him with an awful expression in her hollow eyes.

"Do you remember *me*, madame?" he was heard to say, by those who loitered or listened without.

"But too well," moaned the patient.

"Yet fair ladies have often brief memories."

"And I have been your dupe! Begone, fiend—you are powerless, and I defy you!"—The old man uttered his chuckling laugh.—"Begone, I say, to that hell from whence you have come."

"Then I go not alone!" was the strange response, and there rung through the chamber a shriek of agony, and with it mingled the strange demoniac laughter of the little man in black. The listeners heard also the stamping of his feet, and exclamations of rage; then all became still—terribly *still*.

When the door, which had hitherto defied their efforts to force it, was opened, the stranger could nowhere be found; he had disappeared, hat, stick, spectacles and all; but they found Ninon, and she was no more. The coverlet and other clothes were disordered, the silk hangings torn; the bed bore evidence that a fierce struggle had taken place; but great was the astonishment of all on beholding the rapid change that came over her remains, even while they gazed on them. They were no longer those of the seeming young and lovely beauty they had known so long, but were turning fast into those of an extremely aged person. The oval face became haggard; the smooth forehead a mass of wrinkles; the pearly teeth disappeared; the lovely tresses of silky brown turned into a few white straggling hairs, and the plump pretty hands became shrivelled and yellow. Thus within one minute the remains of the once enchanting Ninon turned into those of an old—hideously old—woman, who had died of strangulation, for on her withered neck remained several marks, made by the ferocious clutch of that black stranger, who could never more be traced. This was on the evening of the 17th of October, 1706.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DISCOVERED.

I HAD been disguised as a *soubrette* for five days when those terrible events, by which I lost my love and nearly my life, and had to leave the chateau, occurred in rapid succession. On the evening after we had listened to the story of Ninon, I was seated with Jacqueline in a secluded bower of the garden. The atmosphere was oppressively warm, and I had removed alike the large linen cap and the false curls with which Angelique had supplied me ; thus, unfortunately, no one who saw me could for a moment have doubted the sex of Basile, the sham paysanne from the Morbihan.

Jacqueline reclined with her head upon my shoulder, and while seated hand in hand, I was speaking of the apparent hopelessness of our future, when she interrupted me by saying, "Remember, Basil, that at our age nothing is hopeless either in fortune or in love."

"True," I repeated, tremulously, while gazing tenderly into her clear and beautiful eyes ; "yet, ere I saw you, love Jacqueline, at times I was already sick of life."

"Sick of life ! Your world of England must be a horrid place, if people weary of it so soon."

"You mistake me. Every heart, as I said to your aunt the other night, has some secret sorrow, and I have mine—a lost position. Bravely did I bear the cross till I was taken prisoner——"

"Do you deem yourself such?"

"I mean till I was left here, abandoned in hostile

France, thus crushing all the brilliant schemes I had formed for the future."

"Enter the service of France. I have vast interest through my father, through my cousin Bourgneuf, and the Comte de Boisguiller. Who can say how high you may rise? We have still our Irish Brigade and the Regiment of Royal Scots, and to be a Scotsman is still a passport to royal favour in France."

"Was, Jacqueline; you should say it *was*. But that day has gone for ever, nor would such views suit me if it remained. I thank you, my beloved, but this can never be."

A sound as of steps among the shrubbery close by made us pause, and then Jacqueline, after looking hastily round, asked "Is the chateau becoming so terrible to you?"

"Ah! do not ask me that, at least in such a tone of pique. With you I should indeed be happy anywhere."

"Should be—are you not?"

"I *am* happy."

"Then whence this repining, Basil?" she asked, softly, perhaps reproachfully.

"Understand me; it is the ever present question, where will the love I bear you—a love so deep and desperate—end? Would it not have been better that we had never known and never loved each other so?"

"Why, Basil, why?"

"You are the daughter of a peer of France, the Maréchal de Broglie; I—oh, Heaven! you know me but as an unfortunate gentleman—a poor private dragoon. I have not even an epaulette to boast of!"

"Then I shall give you *two*," said Jacqueline, put-

ting a white hand on each of my shoulders, and kissing me playfully on the cheek.

"*Mon Dieu*, it is *too* much!" exclaimed a piercing voice; the hands of Jacqueline were torn away, and Madame de Bourgneuf, in all the rage of offended virtue, dignity, and nobility, stood with pallid face and flashing eyes before us. "So, so, this is Basile, the paysanne from the Morbihan! A man, a heretic, a foreigner, a soldier in the arms of my niece, of Mademoiselle de Broglie! Oh, what horror is this!" she almost screamed aloud.

The rustling in the shrubbery is quite accounted for now, thought I. But I was wrong, for keener eyes might have detected the figure of a man—of Theophile Hautois—lurking like a panther near us.

Jacqueline covered her eyes with one hand, and clung by the other to the side of the arbour. Indeed, had I not supported her she would have fallen, and now there ensued a long and most painful pause, during which I prayed the earth to open and swallow me. I was thunderstruck, and poor Jacqueline, overwhelmed by dismay and shame, cowered upon the seat with her sweet face hidden by her hands. Presence of mind alone could save us now. I waited until the first paroxysm of anger was past, and then addressed the too justly offended countess. Heaven only knows what I said then, but love for poor Jacqueline and the desperation of my own plight lent me eloquence; thus rapidly and briefly I related all my story since the morning on which I had saved her life in the mulberry wood near the well by the wayside that led to our camp at Paramé, down to the present hour. Madame acknowledged that she had overheard enough to convince her that I loved her niece with respect and ten-

derness, but added almost fiercely, that the vast gulf opened by our difference of position rendered that love a madness and a crime. I acknowledged all this, and in terms that I cannot now recal, urged, for the preservation of her family honour and her own high name, the policy of preserving secrecy in the affair; and she evidently felt the force of my argument, as it was a circumstance which would seriously embroil her with her brother the Maréchal, her son the Count de Bourgneuf, and perhaps with French society in general; though as a Frenchwoman she felt that she could almost forgive anything that had love for an excuse. After a time, I begged her to remember that I was an *Ecossais*, and besought her by the memory of the olden time, and her own early predilections, to pardon Jacqueline, if not me, for all that had passed. This was assailing madame's weak point, and a hectic flush crossed the pale cheek of Jacqueline, as, no doubt, she thought of "the handsome Scottish Captain of milord Clare's Dragoons," of whom we heard so much every evening.

"*Très bien, monsieur*; am I then to understand that you are Scottish?" said she, in a gentler tone.

"I am, madame. Let your favour for one whom you have so often said was dear to you—a soldier of fortune—plead for me now."

"'Tis well that this *malheur* has occurred here at my sequestered house, and not at the Hotel de Broglie in the Rue St. Dominique at Paris: but let that pass. We Bretons love the Scots as the friends of our forefathers in the olden time, and we all know that it was to the love of a young Scottish girl our brave Du Guay Trouin owed his escape from an English prison, and

that in her arms he died in 1736.* But this painful matter must be ended, and a convent may cure mademoiselle of an infatuation which degrades her. To drive *you*, monsieur, from the chateau——”

“The fate I own, with all humility, I deserve.”

“Would be to ensure your death : but mademoiselle my niece has acted most unwisely—even culpably—in not confiding in me ; and now you must be separated, and for ever.”

“Alas, madame !——”

“This absurd disguise, monsieur, must be relinquished, and to have you sent at once from hence in safety, if it can be accomplished, shall now be my task.”

“I submit to your decision, madame,” said I, with a sinking heart. “Deep affection causes deep submission, and to love so fondly as I do, often causes more sorrow than joy. Dear, dear Jacqueline !”

“Enough of this !” interrupted Madame de Bourgneuf, loftily and severely. “Retire to your room, monsieur. When next I see you, let it be in the attire of your sex, and dearly shall that minx Angélique pay for her share in this deplorable—this most unfortunate affair.”

I bowed and retired, feeling in my heart that Madame de Bourgneuf treated me with great leniency, and such as I did not deserve ; for she might have summoned her servants, and had me hanged on the nearest tree, had such been her will and pleasure. I paused at the end of the garden-walk, and looked back to the rose-covered bower. The countess was regarding me with a fixed and stern expression ; but

* A love for the Scots and dislike for their fellow-subjects still exist in Brittany. See “Wanderings” there, published by Bentley, 1860, &c.

Jacqueline, unseen by her, waved her hand to me sadly in adieu. My soul was wrung—if I may use such an expression—wrung with agony for the unmerited shame thus brought on one who loved me so well, who was so tender and so true ; and I cursed my own selfishness. I bowed in return, and hurried towards the chateau. Alas ! that farewell glance was the last we were doomed to see of each other as lovers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SUSPENSE.

I HAVE but little courage to write of what followed this upbraiding interview and degrading discovery; for one episode of horror followed another. I resumed the green hunting-suit of the absent count, and Angélique was filled with dismay when she saw me clad in it, as she dreaded the punishment that would be awarded for her connivance in the recent masquerading ; and moreover she loved her young mistress dearly. Then she wept when she found it was ordained that I was to depart secretly that night on horseback, and that it was to be given out that Basile, the paysanne from the Morbihan, had eloped or run away. I was to be the bearer of a special letter from madame to the Comte de Boisguiller, Governor of St. Malo, charging him by his old allegiance to her, and his present friendship, to have me despatched on board the first British ship that came in sight of the city, or sent by an especial boat to the Isle of Jersey : in short, to get me out of the province at all hazards, and quietly too. It occurred to me that the count might neither seek a ship nor send a boat, but instead

of obeying his venerable innamorata, might cast me into a vault at St. Malo as a prisoner ; however, I felt so crushed, so crestfallen and miserable by the sudden though not expected turn the matter had taken, that for a long time after these events I cared very little what became of me. The evening drew on, and twilight deepened into night. Then Madame de Bourgneuf, on inquiring for her niece, found that she was not within the chateau ; on this she had the great bell rung repeatedly to summon her from the garden or grounds ; but it rang in vain, for there was no appearance of our Jacqueline. After this the countess sent for me, and addressing me sternly, said—

“ Monsieur, my letter for M. le Comte le Boisguiller is here, ready written and sealed, the horse which is to bear you to St. Malo is ready in the stable, saddled and bridled, but you shall not pass the gate of Bourgneuf until mademoiselle returns to her apartment. Do you understand me ? ”

“ I beseech you, madame—— ”

“ Beseech me not ! ” she interrupted, sharply. “ There is some other trick—some vile plot in this prolonged absence at an hour so unusual, and on the eve of your departure, too ; so I shall keep you as a hostage for her.”

But as the first hours of this anxious night drew on, the surprise of the countess and her household took the new phase of alarm and fear—a feeling that was quickened by my repeated assurances of ignorance, and my too evident deep anxiety. The avenue of yew and orange trees, the lawn and its shrubbery, the borders of the lake, the garden, the labyrinth, and every room, turret, and corner of the chateau, were rigidly searched without success, for no trace of the missing one was found, till Urbain the gardener picked

up, near the door of the bower in which we had been seated when madame discovered us, a small kid glove and a gold bracelet, which we knew belonged to Jacqueline. Near these, on a bush, were some fragments of lacc torn from her dress; and when inspected by lantern-light the garden-walk and border bore evidence of a struggle; the flowers were crushed and bushes torn, and in the earth were the deep footmarks of a man who wore sabots. About ten yards from the bower we found a small axe, which had been lost or cast away. It was such as woodmen generally used, and cut upon the handle, appeared the name of T. HAUTOIS! The deductions we drew from these traces and indications filled my soul with the keenest alarm and horror!

* * * * *

That Jacqueline had been violently assaulted, carried off, and perhaps killed ruthlessly by this outlaw, who had so long vowed vengeance on her family, and whom Jacquot and I had both seen lurking in the grounds during the past week, seemed beyond all doubt. Of his extreme cunning, ingenuity, and of the length his daring and brutality could carry him, I had already had ample proof, and my heart sickened as imagination pictured the gentle, soft, and delicately nurtured Jacqueline, writhing and helpless in his felon hands.

The lamentations of Angelique and the female domestics were mingled with the oaths and maledictions of the men, who proceeded at once to arm themselves with muskets and pistols; and now it was that Madame de Bourgneuf, in her despair, was disposed to rely on me. She pressed my hand in hers, and said, in a broken voice—"Monsieur, if you ever loved my niece, as you say you do, aid in her rescue from this demon!"

I returned the pressure in silence, and was making preparation to scour the roads and thickets which covered all the district, when, amid our consternation, the tramp of horses was heard, and the Chevalier de Boisguiller, accompanied by twelve hussars, rode hurriedly up to the gate. The countess was standing on the front door-steps of the chateau, pale, trembling, and her eyes red with weeping. Some ten men, including Urbain, the valets, gardeners, and grooms, stood around her, loading their arms, fixing and snapping their flints, and lighting torches and lanterns, for darkness had long since set completely in. The Chevalier dismounted, threw his bridle-reins to a hussar, and advancing to the countess, said, with a smiling bow—

“*Peste !* but I seem to have come at a critical time, madame. Has the lake been poached, the hen-roost robbed, or what, that you are preparing to take the field like a chatelaine of old?”

“Oh, chevalier, you have indeed come at a most critical time. Heaven itself must have sent you!”

“Not at all,” replied the heedless hussar. “I am such a sad dog that I fear Heaven has long since given me up as incorrigible, but I have been sent here by order of the count, my father, with a sergeant and twelve troopers. You must learn, that on the day I had last the honour to visit you, a letter came to the commandant of St. Malo—a private letter, oddly spelled, on a very crumpled piece of paper, and bearing the feigned signature of Theophile Damien, but bringing information that an English spy was secreted *here*. So, as duty compelled the count to see into the matter, and friendship urged that he should spare you an affront, he despatched me to make the necessary

inquiries. Now I remember me of a soubrette of my cousin's——"

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said the poor countess, speaking rapidly amid a torrent of tears, "the person of whom you speak is no spy—for that you have my word of honour."

The chevalier bowed low, with his right hand on his heart, accepting the pledge for me.

"He is no spy, and must be protected. He it was who saved the life of Jacqueline, and will peril his life with you to save her once again, if indeed it be not too late already."

"Again—too late—what *do* you mean?"

"She means, chevalier," said I, "that Mademoiselle Jacqueline has been torn from us by a ruffian of the most daring and unscrupulous character—by Hautois, the galley-slave."

"Hautois!" repeated the chevalier, with indescribable alarm.

"By Hautois, and thus your arrival is most opportune. I am the person referred to in your orders; but for Heaven's sake—for the sake of Mademoiselle Jacqueline, waste no time or thought on me. I will assist you, aid you with my life to save, to rescue her, and after that is achieved, deal with me as you will."

For a full minute the Frenchman seemed to lose his invincible self-possession on hearing all this, but in a few words I acquainted him with what had occurred, and urged the necessity of immediate action. On hearing the name of Hautois, with whose story he was familiar, the chevalier changed colour, and appeared much disturbed and alarmed.

"If 'tis he, we have indeed no time to lose," said he, through his clenched teeth; "but the pursuit must

be on horseback—the servants can beat the woods, while my hussars shall scour the roads. You ride monsieur, I presume?”

Under other circumstances I might have smiled at the question, but then I simply replied in the affirmative.

“*Bon !* then get a horse from the stables, and let us begone.”

In a few minutes our plan was detailed, and we all separated, inspired by anxiety and excitement. Three hussars took the road towards Dinan ; three towards St. Paul le Plenguen ; three on that which led to Montford, and other three on that which led towards Rennes. The armed servants under Urbain the gardener and the porter, who had been once a soldier, proceeded to search the woods and forests, while the chevalier and I departed at a gallop towards St. Aubin du Cormier, stopping for inquiry every person we met on the road. The chateau was to be our point of rendezvous.

“Save her—bring her home in safety,” were the parting words of the countess, “and I vow to God to hang a silver lamp worth a thousand livres on the altar at Roscoff !”

This was a little chapel near Leon in Brittany, built by Mary Queen of Scots, in memory of her landing there during a storm when on her voyage from Scotland to France.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BLOODHOUND.

“WHEN nothing remains of an adventure,” writes some one, “it is always possible to consider it a dream.” As yet I could not realize this, though frequently asking of myself, Is all this sudden calamity a truth ?

for I thought, spoke, and acted as one who dreamed.

But three hours—they seemed so many ages—but three hours ago, I had been seated in yonder garden-bower with Jacqueline, listening to her voice, while her cheek reined upon my shoulder, fearing nothing save the shadowy future, thinking of ourselves and of our love alone. *Now* how all was changed ! I had been discovered, and all but expelled from the chateau, while she had been abducted, and by such an abductor ! Now I was riding side by side with a French officer—his comrade for the time—and he was that Chevalier de Boisguiller, who had been so long my *bête noire*. At the very moment I was thinking of all these things, what might be the peril, the suffering, the desperate extremity of Jacqueline ! Where was she, and how circumstanced in the power of a brutal galley-slave ? Might we not be riding in the wrong direction, and thus, perhaps, abandoning her to the very fate from which we sought to save her ? The stars that looked so brightly down on us looked also down on her ; but where was she ? Every thought and fear was maddening ! When contrasted with my own keen anxiety, the *sang-froid* of the French officer piqued and annoyed me. It was well for me, however, that he was ignorant of the relation that existed between his cousin and me, as, apart from any fancy he might himself have had for her, in the extreme ideas of difference of rank, religion, and so forth, cherished by the French *noblesse*, he would have thought no more of quietly pistolling me, on the score of presumption, than of shooting a weasel. Thus my ill-concealed emotions he put down in his own mind as the result of humanity and gratitude.

“*Mon ami*, I rather like you,” said he, as we rode

on together ; “ I can see that you are courageous, and that is better than to be merely brave.”

“ Merely brave—what do you mean, chevalier ?”

“ We French make a distinction in this matter. A soldier may be very brave, and yet on some occasions may not have courage to manifest his bravery.”

“ I confess that this paradox is too subtle for me, especially at such a time. But tell me, chevalier, was this wretch of whom we are in pursuit ever in the French service ?”

“ I regret to say that he was, until discharged with a *cartouche jaune* as an incorrigible rogue.”

He referred to the discharge printed on yellow paper and given to those men of the French army who were dismissed under sentence of degradation.

For a few miles we diverged into every cross path, but always returned to the main road ; and we questioned closely the few persons, chiefly charcoal-burners, whom in that sequestered region we met abroad at such an hour, but questioned them in vain. Thus the short night of August was soon spent. The clear stars still shone brightly in the blue sky ; but already there were indications of the dawn that was at hand, for a warm flush was stealing over the east when we found ourselves at Fougères, a little town situated on the river Nanson, having some leather manufactories and a strong old castle, wherein the lords of that *Seigneurie* resided. There we turned our horses without prosecuting our inquiries, as it was by no means likely that those of whom we were in search would be found in a busy town. So the night had passed away—a night without tidings of Jacqueline !

Broader and deeper grew the light of morning, and clouds of sombre grey or purple that overhung the

mountains and seemed to roll along their distant ridges, became lighted up and edged with saffron and gold. We were returning at a canter along the highway to Bourgneuf, in the hope that on reaching that place we might find that some of our searchers had returned with happy tidings and better success than ourselves; but we had scarcely proceeded two miles when we met Urbain the gardener and Bertrand the porter, each armed with a musket. They were accompanied by an old peasant, whose head was bound about with a cloth to conceal a wound, which seemed to have bled profusely. They had been scouting in the woodlands which bordered the highway, and had there met this peasant, who was a woodcutter, and who informed them that he had seen a man dragging a woman towards the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier, and that when attempting to interfere when she claimed his succour and protection, her captor struck him down with the butt of a heavy pistol. This rencontre occurred about three miles from the place where we were then speaking.

“*Pardieu!* this is valuable intelligence,” exclaimed Boisguiller; “but how shall we track them through these dense thickets?”

“Monsieur, you cannot do it on horseback,” replied the peasant; “but as my hut is close by, you may leave your horses there, and then, as I should like to repay that cowardly rascal for the tap he gave me on the head, I shall give you sure means of tracking him, for I have in keeping a Spanish bloodhound belonging to Monseigneur the Count of Fougères, and it is completely at your service.”

“I thank you for this great aid, *mon ami*,” said my companion; “the count knows me well—I am the

Chevalier de Boisguiller, son of the Governor of St. Malo."

On hearing this the peasant made a succession of low bows, scraping the turf with his sabots at each.

The reader may imagine the haste and satisfaction with which we availed ourselves of the offer of the old woodman, and as we proceeded to his humble hut, which was situated close to a bend of the Nanson, I questioned him closely and anxiously about the appearance of the persons he had seen. The tall powerful man in a common blouse and fur cap, with a girdle and *couteau de chasse*, was as certainly Theophile Hautois as the poor pale girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair, whose hands he had tied with a cord, and whose mouth he had gagged with a handkerchief, was certainly our Jacqueline. His description made me tremble with anguish and rage, and Boisguiller to gnaw the ends of his moustaches. We quitted our saddles, stuck our pistols in our girdles, and had the bloodhound brought forth.

"Messieurs," said the woodman, as he led forward the dog by a strong steel chain, "there is not in France, and certainly not in Bretagne or Normandy, a *limier* with a finer nose than this; and set him but once upon the track of those we seek—let the distance between us be ever so great, and let it be through the thickest woods and by the most covert paths—ay, *pardieu*, by the Blackwater of St. Aubin du Cormier, this dog will trace them."

"To the proof, without delay!" exclaimed the chevalier, while I examined attentively the ferocious brute on whose instincts our hopes depended.

Its back was about thirty inches high, its limbs exhibited vast muscle, and its chaps were long, pendu-

hairs, and frothy. It was of a deep dark-brown hue, and was of that breed which the Spaniards once used with such terrible effect on the continent and adjacent isles of South America. Leaving our horses at the hut, we retraced our steps, and entering the wild forest, which more or less covers all that part of the country, an hour's walk brought us to the place where the woodman had encountered Hautois and his victim about seven hours before—at midnight, in fact, and he assured us of the place by showing on the grass traces of the blood which had flowed from the wound inflicted by the outlaw's pistol-butt. The fierce hound inserted his square muzzle among the grass, and sniffed up blood, on which the peasant gave him a kick, saying, "*Voilà, mon ami!*—come, come, 'tis not my blood we wish you to sniff at so pleasantly, but the blood of another."

"True," said Boisguiller, "but how are we to give him the scent of Hautois, or of the lady?"

"*Morbleu!*" grumbled the woodman; "I did not think of that."

"Had we but a piece of mademoiselle's dress!" said Urbain.

"Here are what we require," said I, in a voice all but breathless with emotion, while drawing from my breast the kid glove and fragment of lace which we had found near the garden-bower. The chevalier gave me a keen glance, and snatching the relics almost abruptly from my hand, pressed them against the black nostrils of the dog, patting him soothingly the while. The glove was perfumed, fortunately, and thus, in a minute or less, the dog, after sniffing and snorting about among the grass, with his head bent low, and ears drooping, began to run rapidly through the forest, straining on

his collar and chain, and dragging after him the peasant who grasped the other end of it.

"*Parbleu, messieurs !* he is on the track now ! See how he follows the scent !" exclaimed the old man, who was compelled to run fast to keep up with the dog and with us. "Oh ! by St. Malo ! See, here are the footsteps, the crushed leaves, the broken twigs ! 'Tis this way they have passed, messieurs. *Ah ! sacré coquin !* That tap on the head shall cost thee dear. Look to your pistols, monsieur le chevalier, for *he* has a pair, and I know not the moment we may come upon him."

Thus surely guided by the searching instinct and unflinching pertinacity of the hound, we hastened through the forest in silence, and with hearts full of intense anxiety and hope. The dog was sometimes at fault when runnels of water crossed our path, but the peasant, who was an acute old fellow, with a face of the true Breton type—eyes that were deeply set and thoughtful, a high nose and square forehead—soon set him right again.

What must poor Jacqueline, so delicate and so tenderly nurtured, have suffered while forced to pursue such paths as these ? We were now at least eight miles distant from Bourgneuf, and for her to have been dragged through a forest at midnight, and by such hands ! The idea was too dreadful to embody in fancy, so let me hasten over what follows.

At a part of the forest which was so dense that the intertwined branches of the trees almost excluded the light of the sun, the dog stopped at the root of a large elm, and began to bay loudly over some tufts of grass, leaves, and branches that were freshly heaped up there. He snorted, growled savagely, and then proceeded to

tear up the little mound with his nose and fore-paws.

"The scent ends here," said the peasant, looking somewhat bewildered and alarmed.

"There must be some mistake," said the chevalier, with annoyance in his tone ; "we have been in pursuit of the wrong person. But some mystery may be concealed here. Urbain, Bertrand, scrape aside this heap, and let us see what the dog's nose has discovered."

They readily plied their musket-butts, and then their hands, while I stood by, feeling more dead than alive, for the horror of anticipation overcame me. A bit of an orange silk dress appeared. Let me endeavour to write briefly and calmly what followed.

In a hollow, a hasty grave, half dug and half heaped up, about three feet deep in all, we found the body of Jacqueline, covered by leaves, branches, and tufts of grass. She lay upon her back ; her right hand, so small and beautiful, clutched a tuft of grass ; the teeth were clenched—there was no relaxation of the jaw—clenched as if with agony, and foam was plainly discernible on the white and parted lips ; yet she was lovely like a dead angel, and all the divine serenity of innocence was there.

Standing aloof like one transfixed or petrified, I saw them raise her up, and saw her head drooping pendulously backward with its long dishevelled hair clotted with blood, the bare bosom and the tattered dress. Then I heard Boisguiller exclaim in accents of horror—

"She is dead now ; but that mere wound could never have killed her—*she has been stunned and buried alive!* Poor Jacqueline ! What she has endured ere death released her, her lips can never tell us now."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FOREST OF ST. AUBIN DU CORMIER.

WHEN my thoughts took some coherence again, evening had come on, and I found myself alone and still in a forest—alone with the bloodhound, whose steel chain I grasped with an unyielding hand. I heard the rising wind shaking the tops of the lofty oaks. I remembered now, like one who, after a long and deep slumber recalls the passages of a dream, that near the tree beneath which we found *her*, Urbain the gardener had picked up a fur cap, which I had no difficulty in recognising as one that had been worn by Hautois. This furnished the dog with a scent, put us on his track, and the livelong day we had followed it like Indians on the trail of an enemy.

One by one, Guillaume de Boisguiller, Urbain the gardener, Bertrand, the old porter, the peasant, and others, had dropped behind in weariness; but I, taking the dog in hand, inspired and endued by revenge with thrice my natural strength, had urged the pursuit alone, through wild thickets, up rough ravines, and across streams and torrents, while a pale face, in awful repose, with eyes glazed and half open, and a mouth the lips of which were two blue lines, seemed to lead me on—and on I went, unflinchingly and unswervingly. Gradually there came a horrid calmness to my mind—the calmness that follows a shock—a grief too great to last; and there was something soothing in the conviction that Hautois could not escape me; that so surely as if I held an enchanted clue or magic wand I could track him now, if I husbanded my strength, and I could have kissed the

ferocious dog that led me on his devious and secret track. What had she suffered—my poor Jacqueline!—how much endured ere death came to her release! It may seem strange, but I had a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that her sufferings were all over now—that she was at rest, at peace, and that she would see how fearfully I would avenge her. But how, was the startling question or thought which occurred to me; for in the rapidity of my pursuit through the thickets of briars and matted shrubs in which I had to make my way, up the rocks which I had to climb, or down which I had to leap, the pistols had dropped from my girdle, when or where I knew not, and thus I was—defenceless! Yet I heeded not even this terrible conviction; my only desire was to reach, to meet and to grapple with Hautois—weary though I was, to grapple with him bare-handed, and trust the rest to youth and strength, to justice and to God. When twilight was setting in I found myself in a very wild place. The dog was conducting me up a ravine the sides of which were covered with vast blocks of basalt, the *débris* of some earthquake. In rank luxuriance the weeds and wild flowers covered them in many places. On both sides of this wilderness of rocks grew a dense forest, the timber of which was of several kinds; but the under-wood seemed to consist of wild apple-trees. Great mountains of rock bordered this forest on one side; on the other it stretched away into the gloom of evening and the obscurity of distance. Although I knew it not, I was then in the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier, so named from the prevalence of the *cormier*, or sorb-apple tree—that forest through which flows the subterranean torrent which forms one of the natural wonders of the province. On reaching the head of the

ravine, the dog led me through a mass of brushwood, by a path so narrow that it seemed to be such a track as the feet of wild rabbits might form, and then I found myself before a large hut, or *chaumière* of dilapidated aspect. It was built of stone blocks, and heavily thatched with heather and straw. The door, which was opened by a wooden latch of primitive construction, was old and worm-eaten, but seemed to have been once strong and well made. I afterwards found that a bar of oak secured it transversely on the inside. Arming myself with a stone, I boldly entered this hut, and found it deserted. On the hearth there smouldered a fire of wood, turf, and fir-cones, showing that it had been recently occupied; and by the light of this, and the last flush of the set sun which stole through the little window, I could observe the squalor and wretchedness of the place. A few pots of brown ware, a couple of rickety stools, an old chest, a hunting-belt that hung on a nail, and a few sheepskins that lay in a corner, as if to form a bed, were all the furniture of this cheerless abode. As I surveyed it, the bloodhound licked my hand with his hot, steaming tongue, and whined, rubbed himself against me, and scented about as if with satisfaction; then he lay down at my feet, lashing the floor with his thick, heavy tail, as if to inform me that we were in the lair of Hautois—of this human panther! But would this man return to it after the deed he had perpetrated? I could scarcely doubt it; the *chaumière* was in an utter wilderness, and while lurking there he must have committed many a crime ere this. Would he return alone?—if not, I had perhaps only tracked him hither to find my own doom sealed; for I was defenceless. Resolving to possess a weapon, if it could be found, I searched

the whole hut, which consisted of only two apartments, but sought in vain. Nor stick nor bludgeon were there ; so I armed myself with one of the stools, which was certainly better than nothing.

The window of the inner room faced the north-west, where a red light that overspread the sky attracted my attention ; for if not some natural phenomenon, it assuredly proceeded from the flames of a vast conflagration. I secured the door by its bar, lest I should be taken by surprise, and seated myself on a stool in a corner, with the dog crouching at my feet. But to rest was impossible, amid the whirl of thought, the mingled rage and grief that oppressed me. I felt as one in a burning fever. There seemed to be under and about me the ceaseless rush of water. Was it fancy ? The sound was too real for that ; and it seemed to proceed from a torrent or waterfall at the back of the *chaumière*. I again entered the inner apartment, through the dirty and broken lattice of which the moon shone clearly and brightly upon the discoloured and ill-jointed boarding of the floor. No fall of water was visible without, but the sound of it was louder now than before. A trap-door about three feet square arrested my attention ; and on raising it by an iron ring in its centre, I felt my flesh creep, when far down below, in darkness and obscurity, I heard the distant rushing of a vast torrent of water that flowed unseen down the mountain side ; and I now knew that this trap-door—the concealment of many a crime—was merely an opening to the subterranean stream of St. Aubin du Cormier, and that this half-ruined *chaumière* had been built immediately over one of the open chasms—without a doubt for purposes dark and nefarious.

I had scarcely let the trap-door drop from my hand when the bloodhound started up with a snort, and uttered a low growl. Then I felt a wild fierce glow in my heart, and a prickly sensation pass over every limb, when on looking from the window, I beheld him for whom I longed with a hate so intense and deadly; he whom I had tracked thus far—he who had on his hands the blood of Jacqueline—he who had her sufferings and death to atone for—was now plainly visible as he passed through the screen of wild bushes, and approached the hut. The moonlight fell full upon his pale and hideous visage—his black and matted hair. He was bareheaded, and had a pair of long pistols and a knife in his belt, while I was weaponless and weary; but as I grasped one of the stools I felt, in imagination, the strength of three men pass into my poor right arm.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE STRUGGLE.

THE excitement, the ferocious joy of anticipated vengeance, nearly suffocated me, as, softly drawing back the bolt of the door, I retired into a dark corner, from whence I meant to spring upon him. The latch was lifted, and he entered. At that moment, as if stirred by an invisible hand, the embers of the dying fire shot into a flame that shed a red light over all the squalid apartment, and thus the wretch detected me in an instant.

“*Sangbleu !*” he exclaimed, and started back, more in wonder than fear. “Who are you ? hah !” he added, as he recognised me, and drawing forth a pistol, fired it straight at my head; but happily the ball struck the

hard, thick wood of the stool, which I used as a shield, and remained there. The force of the shot, however, made me reel; and as I was rushing forward, he drew forth another, but it flashed in the pan. Then, to prevent the use of his knife, I hurled the stool at his head. It struck him on the right temple with such force as to stun him for an instant, and deluged his face with blood. He was grasping vaguely at his girdle for the haft of the knife which dangled there, when I closed with him, seizing his right arm; and then a deadly struggle for life on one hand, and for life and retribution on the other, ensued between us. To know that I had in my grasp the hand that had destroyed Jacqueline, endued me with such savage energy that for a time I was quite a match for the Herculean ruffian with whom I fought. I was lithe, active, and young, and my dragoon drill with sword and club, had developed every muscle to the utmost. The aspect of Blontois was frightful! His face was deathly pale, and streaked with the blood that poured from the wound on his temple; his thick black hair was matted and in elf-locks; and his yellow, bloodshot eyes glared into mine, like those of a wolf, from beneath their bushy brows, which met as one above his nose. We never spoke as we swayed to and fro, panting hoarsely, grasping each other's wrists with a tiger-clutch, and each making futile efforts to reach the other's throat. We heard only our deep breathing, the ceaseless rush of the stream, like a mill-race beneath the floor, and the growling of the bloodhound, which, by some means, had shut itself into the inner apartment. In this struggle, where each man grasped the other with the fierce compression of a smith's vice, it was evident that whoever got the victory would yield neither

mercy nor quarter to the vanquished. Suddenly a pang of terror chilled my heart ; for I found the muscular Frenchman becoming stronger than myself, either because he had husbanded his powers, or that mine (so wearied by past emotion, by grief, and the toil of the preceding night) had departed ; but he bent me backward till I fell heavily prostrate on the floor, with him above me, and in an instant both his knees were on my chest. As yet, his right hand had never reached my throat, for my left was on his wrist, and I held it from me at arm's length. Relinquishing the hold his left hand had of me, he sought for the knife at his girdle, but most fortunately, in our struggle, our wrestling, writhing, and swaying to and fro, it had dropped from its sheath, and lay on the floor beyond his reach, some yards off, else perhaps these adventures had never been committed to paper. On discovering this, he uttered a horrible malediction, and instantly plunged his left hand on my throat. Then a red light seemed to flash from my eyes ; I felt as if the crown of my head was flying off—there was a hissing and tingling in my ears, and for some moments I endured all the horror of strangulation, till suddenly changing his mind, he exclaimed—

“*Sangbleu!* the trap-door—you shall take a cold bath in the black Torrent du Cormier, my fine fellow !” And with a yelling laugh he proceeded to drag me across the floor of the room while yet breathless and incapable of resistance. He dashed open the door of the inner apartment with his foot, and then with a growl of long-suppressed fury the bloodhound sprang upon him ; rendered fiercer by the blood which still flowed from the wound in the head of Hautois, it grasped him by the throat, snarling, worrying and

tearing, till dog and man fell down together—the dog above, the man below.

Trembling with weakness and the overstrained exertion of my recent struggle, I rose and looked with stern exultation on this new conflict, at this new and unexpected ally, against whom the human brute fought apparently in vain, for with all his strength he failed to wrench or tear the dog's sharp fangs from his already lacerated throat. At last, by the terror of approaching death endued with twice his natural strength, while uttering convulsive sobs of agony, he rose to his full height, and reeled about the apartment with the great dog hanging at his throat and the chain rattling at its collar; and what a face was his, when for a moment a ray of moonlight fell on it through the broken casement!

Hautois was reeling about close to the trap-door, when an idea seized me. I threw it open, and gave him a push with all my strength; and through the black aperture, with a shriek and a growl the man and dog vanished together.

I stood alone—alone, with no sound in my ears save the rush of the subterranean stream—the torrent of St. Aubin du Cormier; how deep, how far down below, coming from *whence* and flowing to *where*, no man knew; but my teeth chattered, and a shudder passed over me. I let the trap-door drop to shut out the horrid sound, and reeled giddily into the outer apartment.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CHAUMIÈRE.

It was not until some minutes had elapsed that I became fully conscious the fierce struggle was over, and that Jacqueline was avenged ; but there lay on the floor the pistols, the knife, and the blood of him whose body was now whirling along the chasms and amid the eddies of that subterranean stream whose source and outlet are alike unknown. Tossing a stool upon the fire to feed the sinking flame, and heedless of the danger of being found in what was doubtless the haunt, the abode of an outlaw and robber, perhaps the rendezvous of his partners in crime, I sank upon the floor, to reflect and to rest. It was only then that I felt how weak, how weary I was in body, how sick and ill at heart. I was trembling from head to foot, and bathed in a cold perspiration ; so much had I undergone within the last four-and-twenty hours, that a kind of stupor came upon me. And Jacqueline—my soul was full of her ! Her voice seemed ever in my ear—her name upon my tongue—her image before me. The contour of her head, with every soft feature and familiar expression of eye ; glances that were filled with affection and susceptibility ; her smiling lip. Ah, the pale mask which lay at the foot of yonder tree in the forest—could it be the face of her I loved so well ? If I am to live, thought I, oh for the whirl and excitement of war—a storm, siege, wreck, battle, anything that will lure me from myself and from thoughts that are maddening. To have loved her and have lost her thus ! Every pulsation was a pang, for I endured all the keen misery of knowing that I had been loved tenderly, truly, and deeply in return, and

yet had lost her. The images I drew of her endurance and death, they indeed were too much to think of long, so happily crushed by my own reflections, overcome by toil, and lulled by the ceaseless murmur of the subterranean stream that poured beneath the chaumière, I fell asleep at last on the hard floor where I lay. I must have lain thus for some hours when voices roused me, and I started up to find that day had broken, and several men were about me. I had a "splitting headache" (as Charters used to say), a burning thirst, and bloodshot eyes, the result of all I had undergone; but on staggering up, I recognised the Chevalier de Boisguiller, Urbain the gardener, and Bertrand, with several others, who followed the track I had pursued, and who thus succeeded in discovering the wretched chaumière which had formed the lair of Hautois, whom they clamorously inquired if I had seen.

"Yes," said I; "and moreover I have seen the last of him."

"How—what has happened?" they asked together, while the chevalier added—

"These pistols and this knife lying here—the blood on the floor, and the broken stool, bear evidence of a conflict. What has taken place?"

I briefly related all, and Boisguiller on lifting the trap-door, gazed with a shrinking aspect on the black torrent that rushed far down below; and it would appear that for dark purposes the chaumière certainly had been built immediately over one of the few open chasms in the rocks, through which this torrent of water traverses the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier.

"Your vengeance has indeed been ample—only perhaps too sudden," said he, after a pause; "and now

let us return, but first, Urbain, we shall set fire to this den, lest it find an occupant similar to the last. Then, monsieur, what are we to do with you?"

"It matters little," said I, wearily, and sick at heart.

"You are probably unaware that the British have landed again, and set fire to Cherbourg?"

"Indeed, chevalier!" I exclaimed, interested in spite of myself, and remembering that the blaze I had seen in the sky to the north-west was now accounted for.

"Yes; a strong force, we know not how many, have disembarked at Bay des Maries."

"Under the Duke of Marlborough?"

"No; the commander is a general named Bligh."

"*Pardi! cet officier est un homme d'expédition!*" muttered the old grenadier, Bertrand; "he has already fired all the coast."

"Yes, and he is a man of courage and daring too," added the chevalier. "*Peste!* he shall not stay long in France, for all that. But we have no time to lose; our sorrowful chase has come to an end, and I must rejoin my troop, as all our forces are closing towards Cherbourg to succour the Comte de Raymond. I repeat but the words of my friend Madame de Bourgneuf, when I say, monsieur, that I wish you every success in life, now when bidding you, it may be, farewell for ever. But horses are here, and Bertrand the porter, who has been an old soldier, shall accompany you within sight of your outposts at Cherbourg; so let us at once be gone."

Perceiving that I was so faint that I could scarcely reply, the chevalier kindly said, that if I wished to rejoin my countrymen, it was necessary to repair my

strength, so he insisted upon me imbibing the contents of his flask, which were pure cognac, and Urbain gave me from his pouch a *galette* or pancake, made of buck-wheat and butter. We separated soon after, and on looking back from the road that led to Avranches, old Bertrand and I saw a column of smoke ascending into the clear blue sky from the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier. It was from the burning hut wherein I had passed a night so terrible. Riding at a quick pace we travelled together the whole day, frequently passing for miles through dense forests and apple-orchards; but after leaving Coutances behind, old Bertrand began to gnaw his wiry moustache, to make grimaces and mutter "*Sacré Dieu !*" "*Morbleu !*" and so forth ; for now the roads became covered by people hastening inland with their children and valuables, and by waggons laden with furniture, sick and aged ; the panic being great in that corner of Normandy ; where the strength, object, and ultimate end of the new British expedition were quite unknown. At last, after the sun had set, and the moon arisen in splendour, we saw from the heights, about seven miles off, the town and fortifications of Cherbourg, with the stately fleet of Commodore Howe riding quietly at anchor in the bay, which shone like a vast but rippling sheet of silver, from Fort Querqueville on the west, to the Isle Pelee on the east. The way was clear before me now. I bade a kind farewell to Bertrand, dismounted, and handing to him the bridle of the chevalier's horse, walked hastily in one direction, while he rode off in the other. Scarcely had we separated, when a mounted patrol of ten dragoons in scarlet cloaks, riding slowly, each with carbine on thigh, came past.

"Who goes there ?" challenged the leader, in English.

"A friend!" I replied, mechanically.

"English, by Jove!" exclaimed the officer in command, as the whole patrol simultaneously checked their horses to listen; "who or what are you, my man?"

"One of the Light Troop of the Scots Greys, left wounded in the rear, after the army abandoned Paramé," said I, stepping forward and saluting.

"Zounds! and you have been in France all this time?"

"Yes, sir, since the beginning of June."

"All right," replied the officer, shortening his reins; remain with us. We are a party of the 11th Light Dragoons, and shall pass you on to headquarters."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LIGHT TROOP.

I WAS welcomed back by the gallant Captain Lindsay, by Lieutenant Douglas, and Cornet Keith (the three officers of the light troop), by old Sergeant Duff, big Hob Elliot, and other comrades, with a warmth that was very flattering; but by none more than by Jack Charters and honest Tom Kirkton, and among them all, on the night of my return, rejoining, or "resuscitation" as they phrased it, there was held quite an ovation. For two months my name had remained on the muster-roll as "missing;" but no doubt existed that I had been sabred or shot in our affair with the French hussars near Dol. We had a jovial meeting, and the pantries of the good wives of the adjacent village supplied us amply with the means of having a plentiful supper. With ham, bread, fowls, wine, and

cognac we regaled ourselves while lounging on the grass, with the silver moon wading through snowy clouds for a lamp and the star-studded sky for a canopy. In some instances, however, the indiscriminate pillage of government stores and abandoned dwelling-houses caused several scenes of riot, disorder, and debauchery, which neither patrols, the picket, nor guard of the Provost Marshal could repress.

I was now in the best place to teach me to forget the past. The merry and familiar voices, the gay uniforms, the noble grey chargers picketed at their breast ropes close by our bivouac, and the *tout ensemble* of the latter, weaned me from thoughts that were oppressive, and the ardour of the service glowed anew within me. A narrative of my adventures in Brittany was necessary, but I took care to relate only such portions as I cared to let those heedless fellows know; and when I concluded, my green hunting-suit, with its Parisian cut and fashion, afforded a subject for much merriment, and for many empty jokes of that small kind which will go a long way in the barrack and guardroom.

I found Charters and Kirkton rather more soured and reckless than when I last saw them. Both had expected promotion to follow our first expedition to France, and both still enjoyed their respective ranks of full corporal and full private: thus, when we betook us to rectifying the acidity of the Norman wine by pure cognac, they began to moralize in their old fashion.

"The devil!" said Charters; "ten years have I worn a red coat, and I am tiring now even of it. But every day that passes into night is one march further forward to the land of the leal where we shall all meet at last; so pass the bottle and let us be jolly while we

may. How, Gauntlet, you shake your head? What the deuce has come over the boy! France does not seem to have improved him a bit."

"Nay, Charters," said I, "but remember that the troop parades an hour before daybreak to-morrow, so no more brandy. Have we not had enough?"

"One bottle more, say I?"

"Zounds, Jack!" urged Kirkton, "if you were not a very sponge you would have been drowned in wine long ago."

"Come, Tom," said Charters, who was rather tipsy, "don't be mutinous—I have an idea——"

"What! after all this wine and brandy you have actually an idea? It must be worth uncounted gold."

"It may be worth the king's commission, Tom, or such a coffin as the pioneer's shovel gives us," replied Charters, little knowing how prophetically he spoke. "We are to attack St. Vallon to-morrow, and if the French have a standard in the field, I will take it sword in hand—I, John Charters of Amisfield—or die in the attempt!"

And tipsy though he was, this unfortunate fellow made the boast with a lofty dignity that repressed the smile which spread on Kirkton's face. And now drums beating and trumpets sounding in varying cadence the tattoo, announced that sleep, or at least silence, should reign in camp and bivouac, till the commodore's ship in the bay should fire the morning gun upon the eventful morrow.

CHAPTER XL.

CHARTERS' VOW.

SICK, ill, without a horse or accoutrements, I was now little better than a non-effective, and thus, happily, was only a spectator of the destruction of Cherbourg. I say happily, for France was the land of Jacqueline, and I had not heart for the work of pillage and destruction that ensued around me.

Lieutenant-General Bligh, an old and experienced officer, having succeeded to the command of the troops, the squadron had sailed from St. Helen's as before, under the pennant of Commodore Howe, who had on board the *Essex* his Royal Highness Prince Edward (afterwards Duke of York and Albany), who was serving as a midshipman to learn the rudiments of the sea-service for which he was destined, and in which he died at an early age, with the rank of Rear-Admiral.

On the 7th August, the squadron, consisting of five line-of-battle ships, nine frigates, and ninety-eight transports, with other craft, came to anchor in the bay of Cherbourg, which is one of the five great *ports militaires* of France, as the general had special orders to destroy the whole place. By this time a body of French troops of the line, in bright blue uniforms, with some companies of the Irish Brigade clad in scarlet, had intrenched themselves in a line which extended for four miles along the coast, from Fort Écœurdeville to two miles beyond Cherbourg, and these hasty defences they strengthened by redoubts mounted with cannon, most of which were twenty-four pounders. In rear of this line were some corps of cavalry. While Commodore Howe sent a bomb-ketch

to anchor close off the town, with orders to pitch a few shells into it from time to time, and thus amuse or decoy the officer in command there, the British forces landed three miles westward of Querqueville, the most western fort of the bay. During the disembarkation several other bomb-ketches shelled the line of intrenchments not only with explosives of the usual kind, but from mortars loaded with musket balls, thus making great slaughter with little or no risk to us. As on the former occasion the flat-bottomed boats were hoisted out, and the three regiments of Guards, with the grenadier company of every battalion on board the fleet, were first rowed ashore, and formed in line upon a portion of the beach that was flat and open. Each boat contained eighteen seamen and fifty grenadiers, and had a red flag displayed at its stern. Beyond the landing-place opened a grassy hollow, with a pretty village that crowned a steep eminence on the right flank; on the left were thick green hedges enclosing orchards laden with fruit of the most brilliant yellow and crimson colours, and amid these were seen the serried files and glittering bayonets of the enemy. This was a beautiful evening, when the summer sun of Normandy covered all the fertile land and rippling sea with warm light, and bathed in purple tints the undulating ridges of the Mont-du-Roule and of the Roe-auchat, while the waves that washed the sloping bastions of Cherbourg, of Fort Royal, and those on the Isle of Pelee, or those that broke in foam on the rocks of St. Anne, seemed billows of liquid gold. Puff—puff—puff—came the white smoke out from the green hedges and glowing orchards, as the foe opened a running fire of musketry, under which our grenadiers and Guards formed line, and rushing forward with fixed

bayonets and a hearty hurrah, drove in the French out-pickets and stormed a breast-work that lay across the hollow way beyond the beach. So rapid was the advance, that in this encounter there were only three privates killed and seventeen wounded; while *three hundred* of the enemy were killed or wounded, and among the former was a Captain Macartney of the Irish Brigade, in whose pocket Hob Elliot of ours "found a letter," as the newspapers stated, "from a lady in London, dated on the 30th ultimo, assuring him that we were about to pay France a visit, and giving a particular account of our strength."

General Bligh took possession of the village of Erville, where several Irish deserters came in to him with assurances that a great force was coming against the British; but he declared that "if twenty thousand came he would not retire until Cherbourg was in ruins!" Having thus succeeded in turning the western flank of this famous port, he encamped under canvas his whole force, which consisted only of three battalions of the Guards, the 5th, 30th, 33rd, 34th, 56th, 67th and 68th regiments of Foot with those of Richmond and Cornwallis; the Light Troop of the Greys, and of five other corps, making, with the artillery, in all about ten thousand men.

The night at Erville was lovely, the air serene and soft. Groves of the wild mulberry bordered the camp, and others of orange and apple trees loaded the night wind with perfume. The stars shone clear in heaven, and the sky was blue and bright from its zenith to the far horizon; but amid that calm scene there lay many a stiffened corpse and gaping wound in the hollow way through which the foe had been routed.

Lord Clare's Irish regiment, 700 strong, occupied Cherbourg, and the Count de Raymond, a Maréchal de Camp, who commanded in chief, had also under his orders Count Horions' new Regiment de Liege, with the old battalions of Lorraine, Languedoc, and Guienne; in all, with militia, a force of about fourteen thousand men, was close at hand, so a bloody resistance was anticipated by our troops upon the morrow. The morrow came, and before daybreak the whole army was under arms, and advancing, with the light dragoons in front, towards Cherbourg, with drums beating and colours flying. Some daring French artillerymen, who had been left in the solitary fort of Querqueville, now opened a dangerous fire from a few pieces of cannon as our troops advanced. This seemed to serve as a signal to their comrades, who immediately abandoned Cherbourg *en masse*, and without exchanging a shot retired to a place named St. Vallon, nine miles distant. The guns in Querqueville were still firing briskly, when a boat from the Commodore's ship was seen pulling inshore to the westward of the battery.

A dragoon being required to bear an order to the officer in charge of this boat, a volunteer was requested for the duty, which was one of great risk, as the grape from Querqueville was sweeping all the open plateau to be traversed by the messenger. On this, Charters immediately rode forward, "recovered" his sword and presented himself.

"Why have *you* volunteered for this?" asked Captain Lindsay, in a tone of reproof.

"Why, sir?" repeated Charters, almost haughtily.

"Yes."

"Because, as the player says—

‘I am a man
So weary with disaster, tugged by fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it or be rid on’t.’

Captain Lindsay, life is no longer a prism to me.”

“Ride fast !” said the captain, briefly.

Charters shortened his reins, gave his grey the spurs, and departed at once. As he proceeded towards Querqueville Point, the French cannoniers redoubled their efforts to bring him down. He frequently waved his sword as if in defiance, and escaped as if by a miracle. Then on his descending to the beach, where some rocks protected him, the battery turned its round shot and grape on the advancing boat. Suddenly there rose from the sea and pierced the sky the mingled yell of many voices. A twenty-four pound shot had dashed the boat to pieces, and twelve seamen and a little midshipman were seen struggling and sinking amid the débris of oars, thwarts, and planks, while the French sent dose after dose of grape to kill the drowning men. The midshipman struggled bravely ; being light the waves bore him towards the rocks, but Charters saw that unless succoured, the poor lad would certainly perish amid the surf that boiled over the ridge. He sheathed his sword, shook his gloved hand fiercely at the battery, and urging his horse into the sea, even while the hissing grape sowed it thick with tiny waterspouts around him, succeeded in grasping the sinking lad by the collar, and turning the head of his gallant grey towards the shore, he bravely battled with the surf, the long waves of which, reddened by the sunshine, seemed to boil in fiery foam upon the beach, and rolled over his shoulders, so that at times the nostrils of his charger were only visible, yet he succeeded in landing the half-drowned midshipman and rode twice after-

wards into the sea to succour the seamen, but succeeded in saving only one. This was done in the presence of the whole left wing of the army, which gave him three tremendous cheers, and a few minutes afterwards the grenadiers of Richmond's corps with the light troop of the Greys made a dash at the fort, which immediately surrendered. As the troops advanced into Cherbourg the French flag was pulled down, and the Union Jack hoisted on the ramparts by the people in token of capitulation, and ere long, the magistrates in their robes and insignia of office, came forth from the gates towards the land side to meet General Bligh, who promised that, save government stores, which he had special orders to destroy, all property should be respected. Thus, by three in the afternoon, our troops had peaceable possession of the town and forts of boasted Cherbourg. In the evening, the Greys, a troop of the 11th and a body of grenadiers were pushed on towards St. Vallon, from whence a party of French Horse, the hussars of Boisguiller, with the heavy dragoons of Languedoc *chequered* had advanced to reconnoitre or to skirmish. As our light dragoons moved off the aide-de-camp of the commander-in-chief rode up to the troop of ours and addressing Charters, said—

“You did three acts of great bravery to-day under the fire of Fort Querqueville, but chiefly in saving the life of that midshipman.”

“Sir,” replied Jack, nonchalantly, “I only did the duty dictated by common humanity; and I hope the little mid has dried his jacket by this time.”

“Do you know the name of him you saved?”

“Not I—never thought of such a thing.”

“Well—that little middy was his Royal Highness

Prince Edward, the second son of the king; and I have it in command from Lieutenant-General Bligh to compliment you, Corporal Charters, and to say that you shall have the *first* pair of colours that become vacant in the force now under his orders."

The nut-brown cheek of Charters flushed, as he replied in a voice rendered husky by emotion—"It is well, sir, and I thank the general. I have saved the lives of men ere now, but they were merely private soldiers, *not* royal highnesses, so my humanity or bravery went for little."

"Charters, this bitterness and pride are your ruin," said the aide-de-camp, who knew well the story of our comrade.

"Not so; tell General Bligh that I am not ungrateful, and that I shall thank him from my soul, if, before I die, he replace upon my shoulders those epaulettes of which they should never have been deprived!"

"He will, Charters, and I shall be one of the first to welcome you and to wet the new commission," replied the frank staff officer. Captain Lindsay, you had better form the two troops in squadron, and make a dash at those advancing cavalry, as the ground is open here."

Indeed, while this conversation had been proceeding, the French hussars and heavy dragoons, about one hundred and eighty in all, had debouched from some hedgerows upon a piece of open moorland, with a swallow-tailed banner of light blue silk flying in their centre. Charters pointed to it with his sword, and said to Kirkton—

"You see yonder standard, Tom? Well—I shall fulfil my vow of last night, or my horse shall go home with an empty saddle!"

Quietly and orderly as if upon parade in Hyde Park, the two troops formed squadron; Captain Lindsay equalized them, appointed the troop leaders and the *serre-files*; he then took post half a horse's length in front of the standard, which was borne by troop sergeant-major Duff, and which was of scarlet silk embroidered with the thistle and St. Andrew, the regimental motto, and the national one, *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

I shall not attempt to describe the fury of the encounter that took place, as I was not present. It was long, desperate, and hand to hand. Charters unhorsed the cornet and captured the standard which belonged to the Languedoc dragoons, who made a desperate rally to recover it, and cut him off. For some minutes he and Hob Elliot were fairly surrounded by the enemy, but Captain Lindsay made a gallant charge to save him, as he was a favourite with the corps. In that charge the captain perished, but the French were repulsed.* The squadron was brought out of the field by Lieutenant Douglas of ours, and it was with a sad heart I saw them enter Cherbourg, bearing across their saddles the wounded and the dead. Among the latter was my poor friend Charters, slain by three pistol-shots and eight sabre wounds, yet still grasping with a deadly clutch the standard of the dragoons of Languedoc. Hob Elliot carried his body out of the field.

* "Several skirmishes were fought by the out-parties of each army, in one of which, Captain Lindsay, a gallant officer (of the Greys), who had been very instrumental in training the Light Horse, perished."--Smollet, *History of England*, vol. vi.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SACK OF CHERBOURG.

DURING the reign of Louis XIV. plans had been proposed by the celebrated Marshal Vauban for the fortification of Cherbourg ; these were then only partially carried into effect, but a noble and spacious harbour had subsequently been formed. Two piers, one a thousand, the other five hundred, feet in length, had been built, and outer and inner basins were made large enough to contain ships of the line ; these basins were closed by gates each forty-two feet wide.

To destroy these, General Bligh had fifteen hundred soldiers at work making blasts, and so well did they prosecute the art of destruction, that the labour of thirty years, and the expense of one million two hundred thousand pounds (English) perished in a few days. In short, the noble harbour of Cherbourg was utterly ruined, and the shipping it contained was given to the flames. We took twenty-four tons of gunpowder out of the French magazines, and blew up all the bastions and batteries along the shore, from Fort Querqueville to the Isle Pelee, and dismounted, or flung into the sea, one hundred and sixty-three pieces of cannon and three mortars, with a vast quantity of shot and shell. Two mortars and twenty-two beautiful guns, all of polished brass, together with several colours (among them, of course, the standard taken by poor Jack Charters), were put on board the commodore's ship. On the side of one of the great sluice-gates I saw an inscription in French to the following effect :—

“ Louis and Fleury trust to Ashfield's care,
Amid the waves to raise this mighty pier,
Propitious to our prayers the fabric stood,
Curbed the fierce tide, and tamed the threatening flood,

Hence wealth and safety flow—hence just renown,
The king, the statesman, and the hero crown!

This work, by command of Louis XV.
The advice of Cardinal Fleury, and direction of
Count Ashfield,
Shall endure for ever!"

Scarcely had I finished reading this, than an officer of our regiment called to me—"Hallo! look out! stand back there!"

He had a match in his hand, which he applied to a train, and in one minute the whole fabric, with a tremendous concussion, rent, split, rose into the air amid a cloud of smoke, and vanished as it sank into the surf that boiled over it.

Two armed ships which lay in the inner basin we despatched to England, and eighteen others we burned or sunk, filled with stones. On the people of Cherbourg a contribution of forty-four thousand lives was levied by beat of drum; and so rapidly did our miners and devastators do their work, that the whole place was a scene of ruin and desolation before the Count de Raymond could muster forces of the line sufficient to dislodge us, for France had then two armies in Germany. Thus, all our troops were on board, and the whole armament ready for sea by the 17th of August; our total loss, after having destroyed what was styled in the prints of the day, "that most galling thorn in the side of British commerce," being only Captain Lindsay of the Scots Greys, and twenty-four others killed, some thirty wounded, and ten horses. The whole army re-embarked without molestation at Fort Galette, about three o'clock in the morning.

The commodore, who had now, by the death of his brother, who fell at the head of the 55th Regiment in

the disastrous affair of Ticonderoga, succeeded to the title of Viscount Howe, gave the signal for sea, and we sailed on the evening of the 17th for England. I was again on board his ship with the light troop of my regiment. The destruction I had witnessed, and the distress and alarm of the poor unoffending people, sickened me of war for a time, and I felt happy, when we bore up the Channel, though still haunted by memories of the land of Brittany, on which I should never look again—a land of stern and dreary mountains, of ruined castles and giant monoliths—the land where I loved so tenderly and endured so terribly. On the 19th I saw Old England again, and the whole fleet came to anchor in Portland Roads. The colours and brass guns taken at Cherbourg, after being exhibited to gaping multitudes in Hyde Park, were drawn in triumph through all the principal streets of London, as the spoil of conquered France, amid a noisy pomp that brought ridicule on the ministry. After this they were lodged in the Tower. Instead of being sent home to Scotland, as we had fondly speculated, the light troop of the Scots Greys now marched through Dorsetshire and Hampshire into Sussex, where we reached the head-quarters of the regiment, then under orders to join the army in Germany. Our fine old colonel—"auld Geordie Buffcoat," as the corps named him—complimented the troop for its uniform good conduct during the two expeditions to the coast of France, and hoped that when on the Rhine we should still prove ourselves "to be his own brave lads, who were *second to none*."

CHAPTER XLII.

WHAT THE GAZETTE CONTAINED.

I HAD now served one campaign, though a short one ; had seen the conclusion of another, ending in the total destruction of Cherbourg, and was on the eve of commencing a third, and yet found myself, despite all my lofty aspirations, unnoticed and unknown. I was graver now than before. It seemed to me that I had seen much of the world, and assuredly I had suffered much in the time that had elapsed between our landing at Cancale Bay and the re-embarkation at Fort Galette. We were now at Wadhurst, a secluded place in Sussex. On the morning after we joined, Colonel Preston sent for me to the orderly-room, where there ensued a conversation which caused some speculation in the regiment, where my *incognito* was still preserved. The secret of who I was, or what I should have been, was now known to Kirkton only, for poor Jack Charters was in his soldier's grave among the ruins of Cherbourg, and the only relic I possessed of him was a pair of sleeve links. The bluff old colonel was standing with his spurred heels planted firmly on the hearthrug, and his hands behind his back, which was opposed to the fireplace, in the true orderly-room fashion, and he gave me a friendly nod as I entered.

"You are aware, of course, Gauntlet," said he, "that money to purchase a cornetcy has been lodged for you."

"With whom, sir?" I asked, in astonishment.

"The regimental agents, Messrs. Cox and Mair, of Craig's Court, London."

"By whom, colonel?"

"Your friends—you should know best."

"I have no friends—never had any," said I, bitterly.

"It was lodged two months since," resumed the colonel, "and gazetted you would have been ere this, but for our doubt about your fate, poor Captain Lindsay having sent your name to the War Office as *missing*."

I stood looking at the grave, kind, and soldierly old man with a stupified air.

My cousin Aurora must have done this—I was certain of it, for no one else in all the world knew of me, or cared for me; but I was too proud to accept of this donation even from her—from the usurper of my patrimony, for such I deemed her—and urged the colonel to write at once to the regimental agents, desiring them to return the money to the depositor thereof, whoever he or she might be. I said this so haughtily, so bitterly, and peremptorily, that the adjutant and orderly-room clerks, who were fussing among docquets of papers and returns, looked up with surprise, and the old colonel, after carefully wiping a great pair of spectacles, put them on his copper-coloured nose, and surveyed me from head to foot with extreme coolness and curiosity.

"Zounds! Gauntlet," said he, "you are a very extraordinary fellow—very! Have you no wish to rise in the service?"

"By my own merit, sir, I have every wish, but not by the money—(of others, I was about to say, but added)—the money that should have been mine."

"Should—hum."

"I shall go to Germany with you, Colonel Preston, as a private trooper, and I care little if I never come back again."

"And you positively refuse this commission?"

"From an unknown donor, yes, colonel."

"Well, 'tis puzzling, but you know your own affairs best. I have the reputation of being the most eccentric old fellow in the service; henceforth you shall enjoy the reputation of being the most eccentric young one."

Old Preston gave me a kind of nod, as if to intimate that the interview was over, and resumed a conference with the farrier-sergeant concerning the re-shoeing of all the horses prior to embarkation, while I strolled forth into the barrack-yard to ponder over what had passed. The news of this interview rapidly spread, and I was speedily joined by Tom Kirkton.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I like your spirit, Gauntlet; yet this seems to me the very acme of petulance and folly."

Selfishness and ambition struggled with pride. I was silent, for it seemed to me, that never again might such a chance of being raised to my proper position occur to me, and already I half repented having scorned or refused the proffered gift, without inquiry. It was not too late to retract! I made one pace towards the orderly-room, but pride resumed its power, and I turned away.

"It must be the act of my cousin, Aurora Gauntlet," said I, "for I have not a relative on earth that I know of, Tom, but her."

"Does it not occur to you, most sapient sir, that your cousin might find it easier and more convenient to forget you—to ignore rather than to remember you, and do her utmost to be your friend?"

"True, Tom, but you cannot feel as I feel in this matter."

"And then, of course, it is not every dragoon who carries in his valise a diploma of baronetcy."

"These last words of yours, Kirkton, have cured me even of regret," said I, bitterly.

"Then I am sorry that they passed my lips. 'Oons man, why not make love to her?—there are worse matches in this world than a young and handsome cousin."

These words provoked only an angry smile, and the trumpet sounding for stable duty cut short the interview by hurrying us to look after the wants of our respective steeds.

So, according to my desire, Colonel Preston wrote to the agents, and the money was returned; but in the next War Office Gazette how great was the surprise of my comrades and myself when we read the following announcement:—

"Scots Greys, Light Troop.—Lieut. Sholto Douglas to be captain, *vice* Lindsay, killed in action; Cornet James Keith to be Lieut., *vice* Douglas, promoted; Sir Basil Gauntlet, Bart., to be cornet, *vice* Keith."

"Sir Basil Gauntlet, *Baronet!*"

Had a loaded bomb exploded in the centre of the mess-room table it could scarcely have created so much speculation as this remarkable gazette did among the officers of his Majesty's Second Dragoons, of whom I thus found myself one. Could I doubt that Aurora had done this? Could I be less than grateful that she—the only being who inherited the same name and blood, was determined not to forget me? Thus, finding that I declined the cornetcy by purchase, without further consultation she had resolved to drag me into my place by a commission without it. As yet I knew not all this with certainty, and was too proud to write to

Netherwood Hall ; moreover, I knew not whether Aurora was there, though, had I considered, the celerity with which the whole affair had been transacted should have convinced me that she was in the metropolis. And thus I was an officer, without having performed even the smallest of those superhuman acts of heroism of which I had drawn such dashing pictures in my day-dreams ; without capturing standards sword-in-hand, without leading on furious charges, or forlorn hopes ; made an officer simply through a note, written by a pretty girl's hand to some official source. Thus was I promoted ; my comrades congratulated me, and I felt a joyous certainty that their emotions were sincere, even those of the old grumblers and the "knowing ones," who at the outset of his career had fleeced poor Basil the recruit of his bounty at the canteen and tavern.

The day of embarkation for Germany had not been named, but it was known to be drawing near : thus, with the limited means at my disposal I had little else to think of than providing myself with a horse in addition to my trooper uniform and other *et cetera* befitting my rank. These friendly and fatherly gentlemen of the race of Judah who hang about all barracks, were at hand to aid me for a "moderate consideration" in the way of thirty or forty per cent. interest, and the whole affair was soon done—all the sooner that old Colonel Preston was my friend. In a *week* after my appointment (the rules of the service were not then what they were afterwards) I found myself on duty as an officer, and oddly enough it was that of a *marine* on board a frigate.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PRISON SHIP.

A THIRTY-SIX gun frigate, the *Alceste*, crowded with French prisoners, had for some reason, I know not what, come into the old harbour of Rye, which was then becoming rapidly choked up with sand, and unfortunately she became, as the sailors term it, *neaped*, which means being left so far aground by the neap-tide, which there rises to the height of seventeen feet, that there was no chance of her floating even at high water, until the spring-tide flowed again. In this state she lay imbedded in the sand, and careened over to port, much to the discomfort of those on board.

Several brawls having ensued among the prisoners, as the marine guard had been withdrawn (to partake in a third, and as it proved in the sequel, most disastrous expedition to the coast of France), the officer in command applied for a guard of dismounted dragoons, the Greys being the nearest troops at hand; and thus with twenty men of the light troop I found myself doing marine duty on board H.M. ship *Alceste*. In her commander I recognised one of the officers of Lord Howe's ship, a young lieutenant, for the frigate had all her guns out save two, and was simply degraded to the rank of a floating prison. He welcomed me all the more warmly that he was a countryman of mine, and one who spoke his native dialect in all its Doric breadth and native purity. He was afterwards that Captain I—— who commanded the *Belliqueux*, 64, at Camperdown, and who in the beginning of the action, on failing to make out Lord Duncan's signals

amid the smoke, after various attempts flung the signal book on deck, and shouted from the poop—

“Up wi’ yer helm, damme, and gang doon into the middle o’t!” Then running in between two of the enemy’s ships he shortcued sail, and engaged his guns on both sides at once.

Now, lest the reader may never have seen a bulk crowded with French prisoners, I shall sketch briefly a little of what we saw on board of the *Alceste*.

A few seamen and petty officers composed her crew, and she had on board, and under their care, four hundred desperadoes, as she was the condemned ship of the larger hulks which lay moored in Portsmouth harbour and elsewhere, being the receptacle for those prisoners whose desperate character or violent disposition rendered them obnoxious to rule and to the rest of their comrades. Each of these prisoners when brought on board was provided with a suit of yellow uniform, to ensure notice and recapture in case of escape being effected. Each had also a hammock and bedding. To cook their rations, certain men were elected by themselves, and the sole duty imposed upon the general body was the simple task of keeping themselves clean, the space they occupied between decks neat and tidy, and of bringing up their hammocks daily to air in the nettings. Soldiers or seamen with loaded muskets were posted at various parts of the vessel, and in the poop cabins were two twenty-four pounders kept loaded; and these, in case of revolt or disturbance, could be run through ports in the bulkhead, to sweep the decks with grape and canister shot. On the main deck, was a railed space named the *pound*, wherein the prisoners were allowed to walk and amuse themselves during the day; and there they

were at liberty to expose for sale those boxes of dominoes, toy ships, buttons, bodkins, and other trifles which French prisoners were wont to manufacture from their ration-bones and pieces of wood given to them by the ship carpenter. But from the character of our prisoners I found few such traces of industry on board the *Alceste*. In consequence of the absence of the marines, the discomfort of the ship while lying careened to port, and her vicinity to the land, Lieutenant I—— soon found the prisoners in a furious state of discontent, and beginning to encourage hopes of breaking loose by cutting a hole in the ship's side with a knife. The ringleaders he had punished according to his printed regulations; but ten days in the black hole, extra deck-cleaning duty, and short allowance of hard biscuits and stale "swipes," utterly failed to repress their turbulence and insubordination. There were sailors, soldiers, privateersmen, merchant-seamen, civilians, and even officers, who had broken their parole, crammed together in wretchedness and filth, some of them being almost in a state of nudity, with nothing more than a piece of old sail tied round them, notwithstanding all the excellent regulations of the Transport Board, and the exertions of the officers and slender crew of the *Alceste*, for most of these Frenchmen were now so desperate and degraded that they cared less for death than life. Thus, never shall I forget the impression made upon me when I looked along the far vista of the lower deck, and saw the tattered figures, the scrubby beards, the scarred forms—scarred less in battle than by prison brawls, the shock heads of black uncombed hair, the unwashed visages and bloodshot eyes of those prisoners, the ferocious hate exhibited by others; and when I heard the yells, screams, ob-

scenity and mockery with which they greeted us as new comers, and chiefly when my guard, as a hint, deliberately loaded their carbines with ball-cartridge before them.

"From what do all these miseries and disorders arise?" I asked, as we retired and entered the great cabin.

"You may well inquire," replied Lieutenant I——; "they have their origin in an inordinate passion for gambling."

"Gambling?"

"Yes; you would be astonished," continued the lieutenant, "if you knew how these incorrigible wretches persevere in a vice that ends in the death of many and the misery of all. Their clothes, their rations, the hair of their heads, and their very teeth, they convert into objects on which to hazard the turn of a card, or a cast of the dice. For months in advance many of them have lost all their food to more fortunate or more knavish gamblers; and so hard of heart have some of these become, that they will see their victims perish of hunger without bestowing a morsel to alleviate their sufferings. Many have died on the lower deck, naked, of cold in the winter, and others of sheer starvation. In the stomachs of two, who were thus found dead in the cable-tier yesterday, our surgeon found only a little water. I have had men posted over the mess-tables with loaded pistols, to force each man to eat his own rations, whether gambled away or not; and all night long we have to watch every portion of the ship, as they are for ever cutting holes in her sheathing with knives they have secreted—holes for the purpose of escaping or of scuttling her with all on board. So, sir," he added

“you are likely to find yourself in pleasant company.”

It would seem that on finding the ship stranded in Rye Harbour, and so near the shore, a privateersman, notorious as a ringleader in every disorder, cut, with the help of a knife, one of those holes to which my friend referred, on the starboard side and just amidships. This had been discovered in time, and in accordance with standing orders, every prisoner in that part of the ship had been put upon half-rations to defray the expense of the repair, which the carpenter stated at twenty-five pounds sterling. A dreadful uproar ensued when this information was communicated to the Frenchmen. Wet swabs, belaying-pins, pieces of wood torn from the hatchway-combings and deck-gratings, brooms, and everything available as a weapon, were in immediate requisition; and the prisoners broke into open revolt on the third day after we were on board. The drum beat to arms, the crew drove below all who were in the pound, battened down the hatches, and promptly ran the two twenty-four pounders through the bulkhead aft to sweep the deck forward, if necessary; but so much was the vessel careened over in the sand that the guns failed to work well. Thus my twenty dismounted Greys, with their carbines loaded, were formed in line across the deck, ready for whatever might ensue; Lieutenant I—— having of course command of the whole. As the disorder was at its height, and several missiles had been flung at us, I gave the orders—

“Ready—present!” but on finding that the din was instantly hushed, I added, “*Advance arms!*”

Stepping forward a few paces, and taking advantage of the lull, I was proceeding to address the prisoners

in the most conciliatory terms, when the privateersman—a tall, strong, and swarthy fellow from Martinique—and naked to the waist, rushed upon me with a knife, in eluding which I stumbled and fell. On seeing this, believing me to be stabbed, Tom Kirkton cried—

"Let us shoot them down—fire!"

Then a volley of carbines was poured in. This shot the privateersman and another dead, and severely wounded ten more. A terrible scene then took place at the hatchways, as the fugitives scrambled, tumbled, and rolled over each other—falling through in heaps in their haste to escape to the lower hold, cockpit, cable-tier, or anywhere; all save those who lay on the deck, and one, a man in tattered uniform, who stood calmly with arms folded, and with his back to the mainmast, eyeing us with steady disdain, as if waiting for the next platoon. With my sword drawn, I stepped forward to question this rash man, and then judge my emotion on recognising in him the—Chevalier de Boisguiller!

CHAPTER XLIV

"TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION."

,"FIRE—kill me!" exclaimed the chevalier, proudly and fiercely; "I have no desire to live after the degradation to which you have subjected me—I, an officer of the Queen's Hussars, and a chevalier of the order. *Ah, sacré!* perfidious English—you know not how to make war."

"Monsieur de Boisguiller, have you already forgot

me—and our meetings in the chateau of Bourgneuf, and the forest of St. Aubin du Cormier ?”

His expression changed on recognising me ; but perceiving my epaulettes, gorget, and sash—

“*Pardieu!*” he exclaimed, with a grimace on his lip ; “we seem to have changed places with a vengeance, Monsieur l’Ecosais !”

He said something more, but his voice was rendered incoherent by the shame and passion, pride and mortification, which almost made him weep. I turned to Lieutenant I——, of the *Alceste*, and inquired how it came to pass that the chevalier, whom I knew to be a brave and honourable French officer, should be found in a plight so deplorable, and thrust among such associates.

“He was sent on board here for attempting to kill the captain of one of our privateers,” replied the naval officer briefly, and with a contemptuous glance at the Frenchman.

“I shall tell you how it came to pass, monsieur ; *you* will believe me ?” said the chevalier, turning to me earnestly.

“Assuredly, monsieur.”

“Our fleet is still shut up in Brest by yours ; so a large privateer of Bristol made a dash into the harbour of Cherbourg last week, to pick up anything milord Howe had left behind him. Among other things, they unluckily picked up *me*, when on my way to Erville to keep an appointment with a little *paysanne*, who preferred a Parisian hussar to a Breton woodcutter. The privateer put to sea ; I was refused my parole of honour, and placed on board this floating pandemonium three days before she was stranded in Rye Harbour, because in resenting some

insolence of the privateer captain, I knocked him down and jumped overboard. He jumped after me, and we fought in the water till a boat's-crew picked us up. *Pardieu*, that is all, *mon camarade*."

I begged the officer in command of the *Alceste* to accept the parole of the chevalier, to which he at once agreed, and removed him to one of the after cabins, where he was supplied with clothes to replace his hussar uniform, which was now in rags, the ruffians of the prison-ship having torn every shred of lace from it, to exchange for grog with bumboat women who paddled about the frigate. We had a bottle of wine together, and under its influence the Frenchman's natural gaiety soon resumed its wonted sway, and as we conversed his voice brought back, as in a mental panorama, the old chateau on the road to Rennes, with its reedy lake and flower-enamelled lawn—the woods, the hills, and rockbound shores of Brittany, with softer thoughts of a time that would never come again—thoughts, however, that he was singularly fated to dispel.

"The story of your encounter with Hautois, and your casting him into the Black Torrent, will form one of the best legends in Brittany," said he, laughing.

"The old Countess Ninon?"

"Is well—though less blooming than her namesake, De l'Enclos."

"And Urbain—and old Bertrand?"

"All well, when I saw them last, about ten days ago. *Peste!* what a number of things have happened to me since then."

"And pretty Angelique?"

"Is now the happy wife of Jacquot Triquot, coachman to M. le Curé of St. Solidore. The countess

punished her thus for her remarkable trick of turning you into a soubrette, my friend, which might have been a very serious joke !”

I smiled mournfully and muttered—“ Poor—poor Jacqueline !”

“ *Parbleu !* how is it that you do not ask for her ?”

“ Ask for *her* ?” I repeated, with sorrowful surprise ;
“ ask for one who is dead and buried ?”

“ Who *was* half dead and half buried, you mean. She was only stunned by a blow, and half-smothered among leaves and grass. She is alive and well, *Dieu merci !* and by this time will be in Paris with her cousin, Comte de Bourgneuf.”

I remained for some moments in doubt of my senses on hearing this ; but there was an imperturbable smile on Boisguiller’s face, as he sat twirling each moustache alternately.

“ Chevalier, you assure me of this on your honour,” said I, hoarsely.

“ On my honour as an officer wearing the cross of St. Louis. It was a mere case of suspended animation—nothing more. You would have seen this yourself had you not left us with the bloodhound in such a devil of a hurry to follow the track of Hautois. In fact, she spoke to us all quite rationally in about half an hour after you disappeared.”

“ Chevalier, you saw how I suffered, and yet you permitted me to leave the province in the belief that Jacqueline de Broglie was indeed dead. Was this fair of you ?”

“ In love as in war, my dear fellow, all things are fair ; so far as strategy will go. Had I told you that she was merely in a swoon—*lethargique*—you might have been prompted to commit some new extra-

gance ; thus we all thought that the sooner you were comfortably out of France the better. She is now in Paris, and—" he added rather spitefully, for my manner piqued him, "and will soon be married—most suitably married."

"Married to whom?" I asked fiercely. But he still smiled complacently, and continued to curl his confounded moustache. "In Paris—ah, there she may soon forget *me*," I added, sadly.

"Forget you! *Ouf, mon camarade!* what would you have? You don't know my cousin Jacqueline. In that huge old barrack, the lonely chateau, you were a brother, a companion, a little bit of romance such as we may find in Marivaux—nothing more. In Paris, the memory of all that will soon be effaced. Monsieur, she cannot come here—you cannot go there—so this is the end of the matter." And he burst out into a fit of laughter.

As a sequel to this conversation, my mind became oppressed, and so little desire had I for the stinging communications of my friend the chevalier, that my whole wish was to get rid of him handsomely as soon as possible. I wrote to Captain Douglas and to Lieutenant Keith to inform them how and where I had found the brave officer who had commanded in the redoubt at Cancalle Bay, and had led those hussars whom we had met hand to hand and bridle to bridle in Brittany. They used their influence with old Colonel Preston, and through him the chevalier effected an exchange with an officer of equal rank, and was sent home to France by cartel. Prior to this, a subdivision of marines having been placed on board the *Alceste*, my party gladly marched back to head-quarters, at Wadhurst, about twenty-five miles from Rye.

CHAPTER XLV

WADHURST.

JACQUELINE *not* dead, but in Paris! It terrified and bewildered me. Was Hautois drowned at last? might he too reappear as he had done before, like a vampire, whom there was no destroying? Jacqueline *not* dead, but in Paris with her cousin, the handsome Comte de Bourgneuf, to whom she was soon to be married! This idea—whether false or *true*, was ever before me, kindling my jealousy, filling my heart with bitter sorrow, and I longed for active service to wean me from myself; and right glad was I when the *Route* arrived for Germany.

Wadhurst is five miles from Tunbridge Wells. That famous Spa was then little more than a village, but many fashionables who were there to drink the waters, to kill time, to catch an heir or an heiress, came over to see the corps inspected by the general of the district on the day before we marched for the coast. The regiment paraded in complete marching order, with valises packed, and pouches filled with ammunition. In addition to the usual accoutrements for horse and man, every officer and trooper had strapped to his saddle a nosebag, watering-bridle, mane and curry-combs, sponge, horsepick, scissors, and spare shoe, all in a canvas cover, and a net for forage. We received the general, John Lafausille, in review order, with our trumpets sounding “Britons, strike home.” And I can remember well the stately appearance of the old soldier, as he rode to the front of the staff, and raised his Kevenhuller hat in salute, while the veteran Preston, erect, grim, and stiff, in his buff coat

lowered his heavy broadsword in return till the blade touched the toe of his right jack-boot. The muscular strength and stature of our men, nearly all of whom were natives of Ayrshire, with the beauty and high condition of our horses, excited great admiration.

A brilliant staff now passed along the line, and it was so numerous, that to admit its passage, our rear rank went about by threes, retired to double distance, then fronted and dressed by the pivots. Many ladies on horseback accompanied the staff. Among them was one in a pale blue riding-habit, with a broad hat and white plume, who was mounted on a dashing grey pad, and rode beside an aide-de-camp, of whom she was asking many questions; and she seemed to be eagerly scrutinizing the corps, the officers thereof especially. Her companion I knew by sight to be a Major Shirley—a brother of that Cornet Frederick Shirley who had wrought my friend Charters such evil when in the Dragoon Guards.

“Have you found him?” asked the major, laughing.

“No,” I heard the lady reply.

“Look among the cornets.”

“But how shall I know them?”

“By their cake and pudding appearance. Besides, each carries the standard of his troop.”

They were now close to me, and I carried the standard of the Light Troop, with the staff resting on the toe of my right boot, so the young lady, a handsome girl with fair, almost golden hair, and dark blue eyes, turned and looked fully at me. She was my cousin Aurora! Though it was for me she had been looking, she coloured deeply, bowed and smiled, and then grew pale—so pale

that her friend the staff major observed it, and said, drily :

"So, Miss Gauntlet, you have found him, then?"

"Yes—oh yes, and knew him immediately."

"Then I hope you are pleased," said the major, biting his nether-lip and adroitly catching the bridle of her horse, which reared at a sudden crash of the trumpets that drowned her reply as the cavalcade passed on. The ranks were now closed.

"Dress the line by the standards, Major Maitland," cried Colonel Preston. "Who is that fool yonder throwing the whole line out?" he added, as a sergeant's horse became restive and reared on its hind legs.

"A fool, but for whom, Colonel, you would have been years ago in your grave at Stapledyke," replied the sergeant, quietly.

"Egad you are right, Duff, for you saved my life there—forgive my anger, comrade," said the kind old officer.

"I would forgive you anything, Colonel," replied the old sergeant in the same under tone, while his eyes filled; "for you and I are the last left of the Greys who rode in the charge on the bloody day in South Beveland."

The review was soon over; we passed the general in open column of troops, charged in squadrons and in line,—went through sword and carbine exercise, were complimented by the general and harangued by the colonel; then the men were dismissed to their quarters, while the officers joined the staff and the ladies at luncheon, in a large marquee erected on a pleasant lawn for the purpose.

A stranger amid that gay throng, and caring little whether or not I made new acquaintances, I was at-

tending to one or two stout and elderly mammas, who being neither handsome nor blooming, had been somewhat neglected; and while doing the honours with our cold fowl, pink cream and champagne, a voice close by me said:

“And so, Basil, you are going to the seat of war!”

I looked around, and found Aurora Gauntlet’s blue eyes bent on me with something of sad earnestness.

“You will shake hands with me, Basil—wont you?”

I coloured and trembled with pride, perplexity, and even annoyance; but pressed her hand in mine, though the wrongs I had suffered at the behest of our grandfather swelled up bitterly in my heart.

“So, Basil,” she resumed, smiling, “I have brought your military escapade to a creditable—to a pleasant termination, have I not?”

“I felt quite certain, Miss Gauntlet, that it was to you I owed my epaulettes, and I pray you to accept of my gratitude for your friendship and memory. My military escapade! Is it thus you term the resource of stern necessity? Would it have been an escapade had I turned highwayman, or joined some desperate privateer? Few resources are left to a penniless gentleman, so I chose the most honourable.”

“I deplore your bitterness of spirit, cousin Basil,” said she, “and I pity you; but what could—what *can* I do?”

“I ask no pity, Miss Gauntlet,” I replied, somewhat ruffled; “but permit me to lead you from this—here we cannot converse with freedom.” And taking her hand, we went forth into the sunny lawn, Aurora holding her riding-habit gathered in her left hand, her ostrich feather drooping over her right shoulder, and

very lovely and graceful she looked in the bloom of her youth and beauty.

"Forgive me," said she, almost with tears in her eyes, for she knew in what a hostile aspect I viewed her; "but I think your conduct to me, as a kinswoman who seeks to befriend you, most unkind and ungracious! Think of what is before you, and that we may never see or meet each other again."

I laughed and replied, "We have not seen much of each other, hitherto, Miss Gauntlet."

"Call me Aurora!" said she, grasping her switch with an impulse that was not all playfulness.

"But then, when I am such a scapegrace—outcast if you will—what the devil does it matter what is before me, or how soon I am shot? Thanks to you, however, my dear cousin, I shall die in the position of a gentleman."

"I would have sent you a few hundred guineas on your promotion, Basil; but mamma reminded me of your dangerous pride, your haughty and resentful spirit, so I tore up the cheque after signing it."

"You judged rightly, my dear cousin; but I thank you, though I would not have accepted the money. The commission you have thrust upon me——"

"Thrust—oh fie, Basil! It was simply managed," said she, smiling, "by a note from mamma to Mr. Pitt, the great commoner, who was once himself a cornet of cavalry; in the Blues, I think, was he not?"

"That commission I hoped to have won otherwise. However——" I paused, as there was a tearful and angry expression in Aurora's eyes, and very beautiful eyes they were, with lashes thick, dark, and long, which imparted to them a charming softness. Then cousinship is such a strange affinity—something like a

sister and more like a sweetheart, that I committed some very ungracious speech to silence, for I now began to perceive that from her mother Aurora inherited a true English girl's face, in expression the sweetest, in features the softest, perhaps, in the world.

"And you march——," she began, to change the subject.

"To-morrow, at eight in the morning."

"So early! Yet I shall ride over from Tunbridge Wells to see you off."

"Thank you, Aurora; but at such an hour——"

"Oh, I shall not want for an escort, believe me. Major Shirley and a dozen others will only be too happy. And now that we are to be friends from henceforth, confess that you have been wrong, Cousin Basil, and that I have been right!"

"Perhaps—it is the privilege of all handsome girls to be right, whatever view they take."

"Did you learn this in France?" she asked.

"Ah!" said I, and with the thought of Jacqueline, my heart seemed to die within me; "in France I preserved your handkerchief, and it saved my life from a bullet at St. Malo."

Her soft, peachlike cheek flushed with honest pleasure when I said this, but ere she could reply, Major Shirley came forward, saying—

"Miss Gauntlet, I beg pardon, but I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Why?" asked Aurora, raising her eyebrows.

"You are forgetting the hour, and that I promised your mamma to see you safely back to Tunbridge Wells betimes."

"Adieu, Basil!"

"Till to-morrow," I added.

She kissed her gloved hand to me, and the smiling major led her away with all haste.

I was happier after this interview than I had been for many a day. The kindness that the warmhearted and impulsive Aurora seemed to cherish for me gave her another and a nearer interest in my mind. Animosity died within me, and I began to think it was charming to have at least one relation who loved me for myself, and I thought of our old Scottish proverb, which says that "Blood is thicker than water." Moreover, how could she help the tenor of my crusty grandfather's odious will, or that fatality by which my cousin Tony broke his valuable neck and made her an heiress?

We paraded duly for the march next day. The several troops were formed, their rolls called, and as the clock struck eight, the whole regiment moved off amid the cheers of the populace and the lamentations of those soldiers' wives who were left behind with their poor little ones, their treasured marriage lines, and a "begging pass" to their own parish, wherever it might be—too often the usual and cruel wind-up of military matrimony. At that moment Aurora Gauntlet, mounted on her dashing grey—a pad she rode in compliment to *us*—her cheeks flushed by a long ride in the morning air, her skirt and plume and golden hair floating behind her, cantered up to the column, accompanied by Major Shirley in his staff uniform, and by John Trot, the valiant hero of Wandsworth Common, in very gay livery, and, like the staff officer, well mounted.

"I'm just in time, I find," said she, as I drew aside from my troop, and reined up beside her.

"I was looking for you anxiously, Aurora. Will you keep this document for me, cousin? for if I am

killed in Germany, I have no desire that it should be used by some boor to light his pipe with or wrap his butter in."

It was the diploma of the Netherwood baronetcy, running in the name of "CAROLUS, DEI GRATIA, REX SCOTIÆ ET ANGLIÆ, &c. &c. nostro Johanni Gauntleti de Netherwood, ejusque hæredibus masculis de corpore, &c., titulum gradum et dignitatem militis Baronetti in hac antiqua parte Regni Nostri Scotiæ," and so forth.

"You shall be the custodier of this choice piece of archæology, for with my sword, Aurora, it is all my inheritance now. In my haversack or valise I have borne it ever since old Nathan Wylie, Sir Basil's evil Mentor, sent it to me as a taunt amid my misfortunes."

"You would still reproach me?" said she, in a low voice.

"Nay, Aurora, on my soul I do not."

"I thank you," she replied, with her eyes brimful of tears; for in addition to the peculiar position in which we stood, nothing melts a woman's heart so much as the aspect of a fine regiment departing for foreign service in time of war. "My mother has become feeble and ailing—I shall be soon alone in the world, so think kindly of me, Basil, when you are far away, even as we shall think kindly of you, for we are the last of our family—the last of the old Gauntlets of Netherwood."

"I am, rather than you," said I, smiling.

"How?"

"Some one, of course, will marry you, so I must be the last."

She blushed painfully, and her glance wandered to

Shirley, but his *eyes*, at least, appeared to be intent upon the marching column.

"I am going to Germany now, perhaps never to return ; for news I have heard (here I referred to the strange tidings of Boisguiller) have made me, even in youth, somewhat reckless of life."

"Oh, Basil, Basil! you must not speak thus."

"Sir, Colonel Preston is looking back for *you*," said Major Shirley, with a slight tone of impatience and authority in his voice. "And there sounds a trumpet."

"Then we do part friends at last?" said Aurora with a sad smile.

"Yes, dear cousin, the best of friends."

She held up her cheek to be kissed by me ; but somehow her rosy lip came in its place. I saw Shirley's face darken, but heeded it little, as I put spurs to my grey and dashed after the regiment, which was now trotting along the highway which led towards Brighton.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SAIL FOR GERMANY.

WE had been very comfortable in our quiet country quarters in Sussex, and being so near London, our officers led a gay life, for at least one-half of them were always in town "between returns;" but now Ranelagh and Vauxhall, with their fire-works and lighted promenades, their belles, beaux, music, and gaiety; the opera, the theatres, and entertainments *al fresco* in the beautiful West end parks, or by barges up the Thames to Richmond or to Hampton Court, were all to be exchanged for the long dusty march by day, or the

dark and weary one by night—the tented camp, the wet bivouac, and the perils of the German war. The regiment was embarked on board of two frigates—the *Venus* and *Thames*. The Light Troop was in the latter, under Major Maitland. Owing to the circumstances of the expedition, and that the frigates, after landing us, were to run down the Channel and join the Brest blockading fleet, under Anson and Howe, discipline was somewhat relaxed, and the seamen and marines were permitted the privilege of having their wives, sweethearts, and friends on board. So there were enough, and to spare, of singing and weeping, swearing, smoking, and even fighting between decks. To most of us the atmosphere, especially below, was rendered insupportable by the mingled odours of bilge, coarse tobacco, purser's gin, and new paint, while the language heard on every side was neither classical nor poetical; and this continued until the Blue Peter appeared fluttering from the frigate's foremasthead, and the boom of one of her bow-chasers announced that all shore-people must leave. Then began the howling of women and the grumbling of the seamen, many of whom, to express their discontent, roared in chorus a song then popular among taverns and crimping-houses, a portion of which ran thus:—

“ Ere Hawke did bang Mounseer Conflan,
We had plenty of beef and beer;
Now Mounseer's beat, we've little to eat,
And d——n the drop of gin so neat,
Since John Bull's nought to fear.”

After having most severe weather at sea, we were landed at the quaint, old, and Dutch-like town of Embden, about the middle of September. There we remained two days, giving our horses gentle exercise after the sea voyage, riding them by the long canals

which intersect the city, and by the sluices of which the whole surrounding country can be inundated in time of war. The officers received a banquet from the burgomaster and Count of Embden in the old feudal castle of the latter, and then we marched to join the allied British and Hanoverians, who were now commanded by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. I shall never forget that route, which occupied ten days. The rain poured incessantly, and we had to traverse a low, marshy country, few portions of which were less than fetlock deep in water. Many of the towns we passed through had been destroyed; the inhabitants of others declined to be incommoded. Thus we frequently bivouacked amid the wet, being quite without tents; but old Colonel Preston always cheered us on. Sometimes he would say, as some of us nodded over our holsters, when riding wearily on in the grey dawn that heralded another day of toil and travel: "You are weary, my gude lads; we shall halt in an hour; but there can be no sleep even then, unless with the sword in the hand and the foot in the stirrup."

On one of those wretched marches I had command of the regimental baggage-guard, and was hourly annoyed by the master waggoner, an East Frieslander, who was never sober, as he drank constantly from a keg of Schiedam which hung at the back of his wain, and his companions assured me that he had never been sober for a year—others averred that he had been born drunk, so great a toper was he. I was riding a little way in rear of the escort, which was traversing a fetid swamp, from whence a pestilential evening mist was rising white as milk, when amid that gloomy vapour there suddenly rose in front a lambent light of a pale blue. Then a cry of dismay from Hob Elliot and others,

made me trot up to the spot, where I beheld a very appalling spectacle. The Friesland waggoner was lying on his back, and literally on fire—flames were issuing from his nostrils, mouth, and ears, and even, while we gazed on him, his whole face and hair were burned away, while the fire seemed to pass over his whole body, scorching his clothes to powder. Dr. Lancelot Probe, our surgeon, came speedily back from the front, but the Frieslander was already beyond his skill, having expired in agony. It was a case of spontaneous combustion. Probe naturally conjectured that a spark from his pipe had ignited the fumes of the spirit within him, and the subtle gases issuing from every pore and orifice, had kindled at once to fire, on reaching the external air. Be it as it may, the terrible episode of the Frieslander had the effect of keeping some of our fellows sober for many a week after.

Our mode of passing the night was generally thus. A ridge would be selected ; we dismounted and cloaked, throwing a portion over the saddle and holsters, each man standing by his horse, and holding on by the stirrup leather to steady himself if sleeping, as he was pretty sure to be. Despite the danger of lying down among the horses' hoofs, some did so in utter weariness, but were soon forced to get up again, lest their own chargers should tread on them. Moreover, a dragoon accoutred cannot lie on his back for the spurs that are on his heels, and the cartridge-box between his shoulders, nor on his right side for his haversack, nor on his left for his canteen and sword-hilt ; thus, when harnessed, he has no resource but to sleep on his face with his nose and toes in the turf ! So the dreary night would pass, and amid the pestilential swamp we would groom our horses, or imagine that we did so ;

pour the water out of our boots ; partake of a ration biscuit soaked by the night rain to pulp, if nothing better could be had ; denounce the Hanoverians for whom we, H. M. Scots Greys, endured all this discomfort, and then again resume the march, which ended on the 31st of September, when we joined Prince Ferdinand at Coesveldt, a small but fortified town in Westphalia.

On those long marches, Tom Kirkton—he had now attained the rank of troop-sergeant—and I had many a confab as of old, for on service rank makes little difference, if discipline be retained. He frequently and bluntly urged that I should “lay siege,” as he phrased it, “to my pretty cousin, and marry her, and so quit this miserable work. Lay siege !” he added, on one occasion ; “you don’t require to do that, for I have no doubt she is anxious enough to hook you for the mere sake of being Lady Gauntlet.”

“This is most flattering, Tom ; and so you would have me pander to a spirit so mercenary ? Nay, nay ; I cannot judge of her thus ; and by this time perhaps she is the wife of Major Shirley, whom I left in possession of the field.” But Tom’s advice, though heedlessly given, always rankled long and bitterly in my mind.

And now, lest the reader may naturally inquire what object we had in making a tour of Germany, I may briefly state that his Britannic Majesty’s native and well-beloved Electorate of Hanover had been overrun by a French army, to expel whom, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick had put himself at the head of the German troops, and to reinforce these, six regiments of British infantry and some cavalry had joined him, and were now under the command of Lord George

Sackville. Since the accession of the house of Guelf to the throne, the whole taxes and energies of the British people had been systematically devoted to the defence of Hanover and the pauper princelings of Germany; just as in the preceding age they had been wasted in defence of King William's dearly-beloved Dutch; and it was not until the peace of Paris that, as an historian says, the nation "would no longer suffer the public treasure to be squandered on poor foreign princes under the name of subsidies, to enable them to fight their own battles, nor the blood of British soldiers to be spilt to water the forests and fertilize the plains of Germany." However, these are after-thoughts; of such we took little heed then, and cared less whom we fought, or where, remembering only a soldier's first duty — implicit obedience.

I shall briefly state that we skirmished through all Westphalia; that during these operations I received a slight pistol-wound in the bridle hand; Colonel Preston had a horse shot under him, and Tom Kirkton a standard pole broken by a grape-shot, and so forth, until the month of November, when we retired to winter quarters, at the little city of Alphen, in the Bishopric of Paderborn, where we remained quietly recruiting our energies for a new struggle in the early part of the ensuing year. The allies, 34,000 strong, were led, as I have stated, by Ferdinand of Brunswick, one of the most celebrated generals of the age; but opposed to him were two *maréchals* of France, one whose name found an echo in my heart, the Duc de Broglie, and the other M. de Contades, with 60,000 troops, the flower of the French line—men at whose hands the British and Hanoverians had suffered a

series of reverses which made us long for spring, that the contest might be renewed and ended for ever.

CHAPTER XLVII.

WE TAKE THE FIELD AGAIN.

WHILE we were in quarters at Paderborn, a mixed detachment (composed of men for various corps) arrived to join the army, and with it came Major Shirley, looking quite the same as when I had seen him last, on the morning we marched from Wadhurst—his uniform new and spotless, his aiguillettes glittering, his well-fitting gloves of the whitest kid, above which he wore pearl rings ; his hair curled and perfumed, with his handsome figure, suave and courtly bearing, his sinister and unfathomable smile. He was one of those lucky fellows who have mysterious interest (feminine probably) at head-quarters, and who, whether at home or abroad, are always on the staff, and *never* with their regiments: thus he had been appointed extra aide-de-camp to Lord George Sackville, and thus we chanced to meet on the day of his arrival at an old windmill, which did duty as a staff-office for the British head-quarters.

“Did you see my cousin, Miss Gauntlet, before leaving England?” I inquired, though in reality caring very little whether he had or not.

“Oh yes, frequently—especially when I was last in London ; she is the reigning toast at White’s and elsewhere.”

“She was well, I hope?” said I, dryly.

“Well, and looking beautiful as ever.”

"Did she charge you with any message to me?"

"None, Sir Basil. Zounds! none, at least, that I can remember," replied the major, colouring.

"Is there any word of her being married yet?" I asked, having a natural anxiety to know *who* might next be proprietor of my paternal acres. "So handsome a girl, and so rich, too, should certainly not lack offers."

"Nor does she, 'sdeath—nor does she," replied Shirley, as a shade of vexation mingled with his perpetual smile.

"Aha, major," thought I; "an unsuccessful wooer—eh!"—"And so you have no message for me?"

"None; but I have just delivered one of more importance than that of a London belle—one for the army."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; we are to take the field at once, and advance into Hesse."

"Against whom?"

"The Duc de Broglie."

On hearing this to me familiar name, it was my turn to feel a tinge of vexation.

"Our muster-place is Fulda; there the allies are to be concentrated;" and with his constant smile, his gold eyeglass in his right eye, and his gilt spurs ringing, our gay staff-officer left me.

As it is my object to confine these pages as much as possible to my own adventures, the reader may learn briefly, that when summoned to the field, the Scots Greys marched to Hesse, "through roads which—as our records have it—no army had ever traversed before," and encamped at Rothenburg, in a pleasant vale, sheltered by high hills. In April we moved to

Fulda, from whence Prince Ferdinand began to advance at the head of thirty thousand men against the Duc de Broglie, whom we found strongly posted near the village of Bergen, which occupies a wooded eminence between Frankfort and Hanover. This village was defended by earthen works, along which were rows of *corbeilles*, as the French name those large baskets which, on being filled with earth, are placed close to each other, and serve to cover the defenders of a bastion. They are usually eighteen inches high, and are always wider at the top than at the bottom ; thus the opening between forms a species of loophole, and through these apertures the red musketry was flashing incessantly as we came within range. On the 13th of April we attacked the duke. Early in the morning our corps took post in the line of battle ; but it was not till ten a.m. that the columns of attack moved across the plain in front of the French army, whose artillery bowled long and bloody lanes through them.

“Preston,” said Major Maitland, as we formed squadrons to attack a body of cavalry ; “that column consists of at least fifteen hundred tried men, under the Count de Lusignan, and you have but five hundred ——”

“True—but mine are *tried soldiers*,” was the old man’s proud reply ; “soldiers *second to none* in Europe.”

These were no vain words, for in less than two minutes, by one desperate charge, we had routed them. The grenadiers of all corps had commenced the action, supported by us and other dragoons, but were repulsed. They rallied again, but were again driven back and forced to retire, under cover of

several charges made by us and by the Black Hussars of Prussia.

"Well done, my own hussars—and well done the Scots Greys!" cried Prince Ferdinand, as we re-formed after a furious charge, without having a saddle emptied. "Colonel Preston, you ought to be proud of commanding such a regiment."

"I *am* proud," was the quiet reply of our old colonel.

In all this affair, our only loss was a single horse—mine, which was killed under me by a six-pound shot; but Prince Ferdinand was compelled to fall back, leaving five guns on the field, where the Prince of Ysembourg and two thousand of our soldiers were slain. By this victory the French army was plentifully supplied with provisions, while we suffered greatly by the lack of food and forage. By it, also, their armies formed a junction and advanced together under the command of Maréchal de Contades, while Prince Ferdinand, with his British and Hanoverians, had to retire, leaving garrisons in Rothenburg, Munster, and Minden to cover his retreat. But vain were these precautions! Rothenburg was surprised by the Duc de Broglie, his brother the Count de Broglie, and his nephew the Count de Bourgneuf, "with sixteen companies of grenadiers, one thousand four hundred infantry, the regiments of Schomberg, Nassau and Fischer," took Minden by assault, and found therein ninety-four thousand sacks of grain. Then Munster, though bravely defended by four thousand men, fell after a short but sharp siege. It was severely, I may say savagely, proposed by de Bourgneuf, to put all in Minden to the sword, on the plea that the garrison of a place taken by assault had no right to be received

as prisoners of war ; “but,” as a newspaper informs us, “General Zastrow and his men owed their safety to the noble generosity of the Duke and Count de Broglie.”

Considering the conquest of Hanover as certain, the court of Versailles was now occupied mainly by considering *how* that Electorate should be secured to France for the future, when we advanced to have a trial of strength with their armies on the glorious, and, to us, ever-memorable plains of Minden. Prior to this, my friend Tom Kirkton had been promoted to the rank of cornet and adjutant, for taking prisoner with his own hand, during our first charge at Bergen, the Comte de Lusignan, a Maréchal de Camp.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TWO PRESENTIMENTS.

ON the night before the action at Minden, while we were bivouacked in a wood near the bank of the Weser, there came under my observation two instances of that remarkable and undefinable emotion or foreboding termed presentiment ; and I believe there are few men who have served a campaign without meeting with something of the kind among their comrades, though the dire foreboding may not always have been fulfilled. One of these instances was the case of Lieutenant Keith of ours ; the other was that of the aide-de-camp, Major Shirley.

Under a sheltering tree, and near a large watchfire, a few of our officers, among whom were Captain Douglas, Keith, Tom Kirkton, Dr. Probe, and myself, were making themselves as comfortable as our poor

circumstances would admit. We had plenty of wine from the regimental sutler, "whose princely confidence" Kirkton ironically urged us not to abuse; we had plenty of brandy captured from a French caisson; we had water in plenty from a stream hard by; we had ration beef boiled in camp kettles; we had biscuits too; nor was Tom's usual song wanting on the occasion, and he trolled it so lustily that many of our men loitered near to hear him. We were in high spirits with the expectation of meeting the French in the morning; young Keith alone was sad, melancholy, and silent, and it seemed to me that he drank deeply, an unusual circumstance with him. Then suddenly he appeared to reflect, and ceasing his potations, resolutely passed alike the wine-jar and the cognac-bottle.

"Are you ill, Keith?" asked Douglas, kindly.

"Not a bit of it," interrupted Tom Kirkton; "it is only the Westphalia wine that partially disagrees with him. Is it not so, friend Probe? Try some more brandy. I took it from a French baggage cart; 'tis the spoil of my sword and pistol. Come, Jamie Keith—

"How stands the glass around?
For shame, ye take no care, my boys!"

But Keith shook his head and turned away.

"Pshaw, boy! don't imitate any virtue of the Spartans to-night," said Probe, our surgeon; "who can say that we shall all be together at this hour to-morrow?"

"Ah, who indeed!" muttered young Keith, with an air so melancholy that we all paused to observe him.

"Look at me, Keith," said Captain Douglas,

gravely ; "there is something wrong with you to-night."

"I grant you that there is," replied the young lieutenant. "I have in my heart—and I cannot help telling you—a solemn presentiment that I shall not survive the battle of to-morrow. Yet observe me, gentlemen, observe me well and closely all of you, and see if I shall blench before the enemy, or belie the name of my forefathers."

With one voice we endeavoured to ridicule this unfortunate idea, or to wean him from it ; but he only replied by sadly shaking his head. After a pause, he said—"I trust that you will not laugh at what I am about to tell you ; but indeed I care little whether you do so or not. An hour ago I fell asleep in my cloak at the foot of that tree, and while there I dreamed of my home, of my father's house at Inverugie. I saw the Ugie flowing between its banks of yellow broom, I heard the hum of the honeybee among the heather bells, while the sweet perfume of the hawthorn passed me on the wind. Then I heard the German Sea chafing on the sandy knowes in the distance, and all the sense of boyhood and of *home* grew strong within me. But when I looked toward our old hall of Inverugie, it was roofless and windowless, the long grass grew on its cold hearthstone, and the ivy waved in the wind, while the black gleds were building their nests by scores in the holes of the ruined wall ; and that dream haunts me still."

"Why—why—what of it?" we asked together.

"Because when one of our family dreams of a gled the hour of death is nigh. I have never known it fail, and so it has been ever since Thomas the Rhymer sat on a block near the castle (to this day called the

Tammas stone) and as a vision came before him, he stretched his hands towards the house, saying—

“‘When the gleds their nests shall build
Where erst the Marischal hung his shield,
Then, Inverugie by the sea,
Lordless shall thy lands be.’

I am the last of the old line, and there is a conviction in my heart that the prophecy of the Rhymer is about to be fulfilled.”

But for the well-known bravery, worth, and high spirit of the young subaltern, and the hereditary valour of the house he represented, we might have laughed at his strong faith in such an extremely old prediction—a faith in which, doubtless, his mother, his nurse, and many an old retainer had reared him; but as it was, we heard him in silence, till after a time, when Douglas endeavoured to reason with him on the folly of surrendering himself to such gloomy impressions, but in vain. His mind was sternly made up that he would fall on the morrow, and that he would die with honour to the attainted house he represented among us—the old lords of Inverugie and Dunotter, the earls marischal of Scotland. While I was thinking of this, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I looked up and saw Major Shirley, who requested me to accompany him a little way apart. I could perceive by the light of the moon that he was remarkably pale and somewhat agitated.

“Gauntlet,” said he, with a smile, but with a very sickly one, “I have here a letter for you.”

“From whom?”

“Your cousin; a letter which I quite forgot to deliver to you when I joined the army in Paderborn.”

“This is somewhat odd: you forgot, eh?”

"Exactly ; very awkward, is it not ?"

"Rather," said I, somewhat ruffled. "Seven months have elapsed since you came from England, and you only remember it now ! Do you recal that you stated she had not sent even a message to me ?"

"Zounds ! 'tis a fact, however odd," he replied, calmly. "I only bethought me to-night that the letter was in my dressing-case. We are to be engaged to-morrow ; I may be knocked on the head as well as another, and thus have no wish to leave even the most trivial duty unfulfilled. You understand me ?"

"Precisely," said I, with some contempt of manner.

"Here is your letter—adieu ! I have an order for the Marquis of Granby. Where is his tent ?"

"On the extreme right of the Inniskilling Dragoons."

"Good." He mounted and rode hurriedly away. I saw it all : this simpering staff officer was in love with Aurora, and dreaded in me a rival. Thus he had concealed the letter till his presentiment—shall I call *his* emotion apprehension?—of the coming day, impelled him to deliver it to me. It was sealed and bordered with black. I tore it open and read hurriedly by the wavering light of our watchfire. The whole tenor of the letter was melancholy, and at such a time and under all the circumstances, it moved me, though one or two sentences were rather galling in their purport.

Aurora informed me that she had lost her mother on the day after we sailed. Save twice, and under rather cloudy circumstances, I had never seen the good lady, and so I had no tears for the occasion.

"Dear cousin Basil," she continued, "my father is dead ; my beloved mother is dead ; my poor brother Tony and a little sister whom I loved dearly, are also

dead ; so I feel very lonely now. The loss of mamma has been my most severe calamity, for she was the person in whom all my thoughts, feelings, and anxieties centred. You are a soldier, and I know not whether you can feel like me—that each link of the loving chain as it breaks unites us closer, by near, dear, and mysterious ties, to those who are beyond the grave—the beloved ones who are gone, and to be with whom would be life in death. For a time after poor mamma left me I felt more a denizen of the world to come than of this, and I feel that though dead she can still strangely control or inspire my actions, my emotions, and my conduct here. Oh, yes, Basil, when my poor mamma died I felt eternity *close* to me—I felt that the circumstance of her going *there* before me instituted a strange and endearing tie between me and that mysterious state of being ; that my heart was drawn towards the land of spirits ; that it yearned for the other world rather than to linger in this. (The deuce ! thought I ; is Aurora about to take the veil—or whence this sermon?) Excuse me, cousin, if I weary you with my sorrow ; but to whom could I write of it, save you ? You promised to write to me, but have never done so. How unkind, after all you have said to me ! I am at present at Netherwood, where the autumn is charming, and as I write the sun is shining on the yellow corn-fields and on the blue wavy chain of the Cheviot Hills. We are cutting down a number of the old trees at Netherwood. (Are *we* really ! thought I.) Some of these are oaks that King James rode under on his way to Flodden Field ; and dear old Mr. Nathan Wylie recommends that the ruined chapel of St. Basil should be removed as a relic of Popery, which stands in the way of the plough.

But as the saint is a namesake of *yours*, it shall remain untouched, with all its ivy and guelder roses. When you return and visit us, as I trust in Heaven you shall, you will find wonderful improvements in the kennels, stableyard, vinery and copsewood."

It was very pleasant to me, a poor devil of a cornet, half starved on my pay, especially since the capture of Minden, with its 94,000 sacks of grain, by Messieurs de Broglie and de Bourgneuf, to read how this lovely interloper and her crusty Mentor cut and carved on my lands and woods, kennels and stables.

"You will regret to hear that poor Mr. Wylie is failing fast, poor man ! His niece Ruth, a very pretty young woman indeed, has just had twins. Her husband is Bailie Mucklewham, a grave and rigid man, and ruling Elder of the Tabernacle, whatever that may be."

Ruth and her twins, and her husband the demure Elder and Bailie ! I could laugh now at the boyish hour in which I thought seriously of marrying Ruth Wylie.

"Doubtful where to address this letter to you, I have committed it to the care of Major Shirley, who has been hunting in this neighbourhood, and is now proceeding to Germany, to join the staff of my Lord George Sackville.

"P.S.—Write me, dear cousin, and tell me all about this horrible war, and if it will soon be over. The major is so impatient that I have not time to read over what I have written. Adieu, with a kiss, A. G."

In our comfortless bivouac, by the sinking light of the wavering watchfire, as I read on Aurora's face came before me, so charming, so fair, so blooming, and so English. She was warmhearted, affectionate, and my only relative on earth, so could I think of her, in such a time of peril, otherwise than kindly ?

"Can it be—I asked of myself—that I am forgetting Jacqueline? But wherefore remember her now?"

Shirley had been hunting in the vicinity of Netherwood, so I might be sure that all his time would not have been there devoted to the sports of the field. Aurora prayed for me! It was delightful to have some one at least who thought of me—whose friendship or regard blessed me, and that my course in life was not unheeded or unmarked amid the perils of war. Aurora might love me, if I wished; surely there was no vanity in me to think so? But I feared that I could never love her—at least, as I had loved Jacqueline—for she was the holder, the usurper of all that should be mine. I resolved to write to her kindly, affectionately, after the battle, and then I would think of her no more; but somehow Aurora's image was very persisting, and would not be set aside. I put the letter in my sabretache, and was looking about for a soft place whereon to sleep for an hour or so, when the sharp twang of the trumpet sounding, and the voice of Tom Kirkton shouting "Saddles and boots! to horse, the Greys!" warned me that day had broken, and that we must stand to arms, for the bloody game of Minden was about to begin.

CHAPTER XLIX:

BATTLE OF MINDEN

THE morning of the 1st of August dawned fair and softly. The sky was a deep blue, and light fleecy clouds were floating across it. It was the opening of a day of battle, a day of doom to many, for who among us were fated to fall, and who to see its close? Bright, clear, and sparkling amid the blue ether shone the

morning star, and lower down rolled a mass of amber-coloured cloud, on the edges of which glittered the rays of the yet unrisen sun. Phosphor paled, the light gradually became golden, and the last shadows of night grew fainter as they faded away. Then the light breeze died, and there was not a breath to stir the foliage of the dense old forests which cast their shadows on the current of the Weser—that watery barrier which the French were to defend, and we to force at all hazards ; hence, as the morning drew on the air became close, heavy, and hot, and our men—horse, foot, and artillery—while wheeling, deploying, and getting into position among green hedgerows and deep corn, laden as they were in heavy marching order, soon felt their frames relaxed and the bead-drops oozing from under their grenadier caps and heavy cocked hats. Brightly the sun burst forth, and ere long the embattled walls of Minden, and its Gothic spires, Catholic and Lutheran, were shining in light. The allied army formed in order of battle on the plain called Todtenhausen, in front of the town of Minden, which occupies the left bank of the Weser, and in which there was a strong French garrison, whose cannon commanded the famous stone bridge of 600 yards in length. After capturing the town from General Zastrow, the main body of the army of M. de Contades had encamped near it. On his left rose a steep hill, in his front lay a deep morass, and in his rear flowed a rugged mountain stream. As this position was strong, Prince Ferdinand employed all his strategy to draw the *maréchal* from it. With this view he had quitted his camp on the Weser, and marched to a place named Hille, leaving, however, General Wangenheim with a body of troops entrenched on the plain of Tod-

tenhausen. Then detaching his nephew, (known among us as the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick) with six thousand men, he gave him orders to make a détour towards the French left, and thus cut off their communication with Paderborn. Though not ignorant of the compass of these triple dispositions, Contades, the Duc de Broglie, and Prince Xavier of Saxony, leader of the Household Cavalry of France, readily fell into the snare.

"Messeigneurs," said Maréchal Contades, with confidence, "the opportunity which we have so long sought for cutting off Prince Ferdinand's communication with the Weser has been found at last. It is the very consummation of our wishes. Already we may behold those vainglorious allies divided and separated in three masses without the possibility of a reunion. Let us march, gentlemen, and by the ruin of General Wangenheim, obtain the full command of the Weser!"

"*Vive le Roi!*" cried the whole council of war.

It was with this idea in their minds that we saw the French troops leaving their strong position between the hill, the long and impassable morass, and the rugged stream, and advancing into the open plain—precisely the same fatal error committed about a hundred years before by the Scots at the battle of Dunbar. The allied army, composed of fifty-nine squadrons of horse and forty-three battalions of infantry, with forty-eight 12-pound field-pieces and four mortars, was formed in three lines. We, the Scots Greys, were in Elliot's brigade of Lord Granby's Cavalry Division, and with the 3rd Dragoon Guards (Howard's) and 10th Dragoons (Mordaunt's) were on the extreme right of the second line, when we formed up from open column of squadrons through fields of hemp and

flax. In our front were the Horse Guards (Blue) and Inniskilling Dragoons, who formed the right of the first line. Over those thousands forming in order of battle the shadow of death was passing, but no thought had we then, save of victory and triumph, and of regilding our lost laurels !

"There will be rough work to-day—Auld Geordie has his buff-coat on," I heard our men muttering.

As the kettledrums beat and the trumpets sounded the usual flourish when swords were drawn, old Preston looked along our glittering line with a grim smile of satisfaction on his wrinkled visage.

"They have unsheathed as one man !" exclaimed Lord Granby, approvingly.

"'Tis well, my lord," said Colonel Preston, "for those swords have killed as many Frenchmen as any blades in Europe."

As yet all was still—not a shot had stirred the morning air ; but we knew that the French were advancing, as from time to time the sky-blue colours, with the golden lilies and the steady gleam of bayonets appeared among the trees, the hedges, and broken ground in front. James Keith of Inverugie was near me. He was smiling now, and there was a bright flush on his cheek with a feverish restlessness in his eye, for the belief in the old prediction was stronger than ever in his heart, and I pitied the poor lad, for he was brave as a Bayard or a Du Guesclin. Ere long a noisy murmur—the hum of expectation—passed along the first line, when eight battalions of French—the vanguard, which was led by the Duc de Broglie, and which had passed the Weser at midnight, after marching on with perfect confidence until they reached the crest of an eminence, halted simultaneously,

on finding to their astonishment the whole army of the allies now acting in unison, disposed in excellent order, and formed in three lines, the first of which reached almost to the gates of Minden, and covered the entire plain of Todtenhausen! A discovery so unexpected filled the Duke with embarrassment; but it was too late to retreat.

"St. Denis for France!" he exclaimed, waving his baton, and ordered the Cavalry, which had covered his advance, to charge. Thus, in five minutes, the battle began in all its fury about six o'clock, A.M.: a battle in describing which I shall generally confine myself to a few personal episodes.

On the Hanoverian Guards and the six regiments of British Infantry—our brave 12th, 20th, 23rd, 25th, or Edinburgh, 37th, and 51st—fell the chief fury of the action. They were all formed in one division, protected by a brigade of British artillery under Captains Drummond and MacBean; and we writhed in our saddles when we saw them knocked over like ninepins—their red coats dotting all the green plain in our front; and yet no order was given for us to advance and support them. After repulsing the French Infantry they were assailed by a column of Swiss, with whom they exchanged several volleys at twenty yards distance. Shoulder to shoulder they stood, our splendid British Infantry, the rear-ranks filling up the gaps in front, the men never pausing under fire, save to wipe their pans, renew their priming, or change their flints, for none would fall to the rear. In the words of the old ballad—

"So closing up on every side,
No slackness there was found,"

amid the fierce roar of musketry and the clouds of

smoke which enveloped all the plain. Colonel Kingsley, at the head of a Cavalry regiment on our left, had two officers shot dead by his side, two horses killed under him, and he received a musket-ball through his hat.

Now the French brought up several *batardes*, as they term their eight-pounders, and the range of these extended to us, the cavalry of the second line. Almost immediately after these guns opened, I heard a half-stifled scream near me, and turning, saw Keith, doubled in two, and falling from his horse, mortally wounded and dying. A cannon-ball had torn away his bowels, and my heart was wrung on seeing him gasping beneath my horse's feet, while the memory of the prediction flashed upon me. He died in a few minutes.

The great aim of the French marshals was now to drive in or destroy either flank of the allies. In endeavouring to effect this object, a charge of cavalry was made. The Household Troops of France, most of whom were noblesse, the red, grey, and black mousquetaires, with the carabiniers and gendarmerie, came boldly on. They were led by Prince Xavier of Saxony, a brave soldier, distinguished by his bearing, his splendid uniform, which was covered with orders, his sparkling diamond star, and piebald charger. Forcing a passage through the flank of our first line, he was advancing towards us, re-forming his glittering squadrons as they came on, when, by order of the Marquis of Granby, we advanced to repel them. I saw old Preston's withered cheek redden with stern joy, and his sunken eye sparkle brightly, as he rapidly formed us in open column of squadrons at the usual distance of twenty-four feet between each other.

"Forward, my lads! Keep your horses well in hand—no closing—no crowding. March!"

But when we began to move, the ordinary distance from boot-top to boot-top between the files became closer and denser, till we formed as it were a ponderous mass of men and horses wedged together.

"Trot!" cried the Colonel; then followed, "Gallop—CHARGE!"

His voice blended with the trumpet's twang; there was a rush of hoofs, a hard breathing of men and horses, a rustling of standards and rattle of accoutrements, as we rushed with uplifted swords and with a wild hurrah upon the recoiling foe. We trod them down like the hemp-field over which we spurred; and in that dreadful shock, down went mousquetaire, gendarme, cuirassier, and we made a horrid slaughter of the French Household Troops. The colonel of the Mousquetaires Gris, an old officer, whose breast was covered with stars and medals, was pistolled by one of our corporals; and Prince Xavier of Saxony, separated from his discomfited column, found himself engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with Hob Elliot.

Aware of the vast difference between them in strength and stature, worthy Hob Elliot tried to spare and capture the Prince, of whose rank he was ignorant, and who was a very little man; but he resisted bravely, and gave our poor Borderer several severe sword-cuts. Hob at last lost all patience, cut him down, and was about to capture him by the collar, when a stray shot struck the unfortunate Prince, who fell dead from his horse. This occurred immediately in front of our 51st Foot. While we waged this conflict on the right, the valour of the Prussian and Hanoverian Dragoons under the Prince of Holstein and others on our left, repulsed the enemy, and compelled them to seek safety in a flight which soon became general along the whole line, down

spite every effort of the Duc de Broglie and Maréchal de Contades.

"It was at this instant," says an historian of the war, "that Prince Ferdinand sent orders to Lord George Sackville, who commanded the British and Hanoverian Horse which composed the right wing of the allies, to advance to the charge. If these orders had been cheerfully obeyed, the battle of Minden would have been as decisive as that of Blenheim ; the French army would have been utterly destroyed, or totally routed and driven out of Germany. But whatever was the cause, the orders were not sufficiently precise, were misinterpreted, or imperfectly understood."

The cause of the misfortune was this. We had just re-formed after repelling the Household Cavalry, when Major Shirley, minus his cocked hat and kid gloves, and what was more, his presence of mind, looking ghastly pale and wild, and so agitated apparently that he could scarcely articulate, rode up to Colonel Preston (who was sitting on his old horse as cool as a cucumber, with the bullets whistling about him), and inquired for Lord George Sackville, whose whereabouts the colonel indicated by pointing with his sword to a horseman whose aspect was somewhat shadowy amid the eddying smoke. Shirley's conventional smile had vanished now, and he rode hurriedly on. His instructions were to order the whole line of cavalry to pursue ; but this message in his then state of mind he failed to deliver, and hence the omission of an immediate cavalry advance—a miscarriage for which Lord George Sackville, after being victimized by the public press, had to appear before a general court-martial. Shirley's undisguised panic was, however, unnecessary, as *his* presentiment was not fulfilled, and he escaped untouched amid the

horrors of a field whereon lay one thousand three hundred and ninety-four officers and men of our six British infantry regiments *alone*, and I know not how many of our allies. Two thousand French were hurled at the bayonet's point into the Weser, and five thousand more, with Princes Xavier and De Camille, were left dead upon the plain, with many standards and forty-three pieces of cannon. On some of the latter I saw "25th and 51st Foot" chalked, to indicate that these corps had taken them. The Comte de Lutzelbourg and the Marquis de Monti, two *maréchaux-de-camp*, were captured by the Greys. The passage of the fugitives across the Weser was a scene of horror. Beside the stone bridge already mentioned, the French engineer, M. Monjoy, had chained across the stream two pontoons, which broke under the weight of the passers: thus many waggons full of wounded officers were swept away by the current, and the flower of the Cavalry, particularly the Carabiniers and Mousquetaires, were destroyed. Amid the shrieks, the cries, the scattered shots that filled the air, we heard the hoarse hurrahs of the advancing Germans, with the clear ringing cheers of the British, and the shouts of "Forward with the Light Bobs and Buffers—support the Tow-rows!" The latter was the nickname of the Grenadiers in those days, and they in turn named the battalion men "buffers," or "mousers" in the militia; while the "Light Bobs" were the pet company of every corps, being always the smartest and most active men.

The town of Minden surrendered with five thousand men, the half of whom were wounded. By sunset the whole of our cavalry were gone in pursuit, save our Light Troop, which, with a few Prussian Hussars, remained on the field to protect the wounded, to patrol

after plunderers, and oversee the working parties who interred the dead. In the activity of that pursuit old Colonel Preston surpassed every other officer. He actually took the Greys *two hundred* miles from the field, and captured a vast number of prisoners.*

Part of the military chest, with all the equipages of Maréchal de Contades and the Prince of Condé, fell into his hands—prizes of no inconsiderable value.

CHAPTER L.

PRINCE XAVIER OF SAXONY.

THE Light Troop had gone more than a mile from the field with the pursuing cavalry before it was ordered to return on the service just stated. When falling back, we passed through a hamlet where the baggage of our brigade was lying, and there we were surrounded by our soldiers' wives, clamorously inquiring for tidings of the past day.

"Ob, please your honour, gude sir," cried one, holding her baby to her bare breast with one hand, while the other clung to my stirrup-leather, her eyes streaming with tears the while; "can you tell us if the regiment has been engaged, for heavy has the firing been all day?"

"Have the Greys suffered—have the Greys suffered?"

"Did you see my puir gudeman—he is in the 1st troop—John Drummond, sir?"

"Shot—my poor Willie shot!" shrieked another. "Then God help his puir bairns and me in this wae fu' country, for we ne'er shall see the bonnie Braes o' Angus again!"

Such were some of the cries I heard on all sides as

* "Regimental Records."

we hurried through the hamlet at a trot, and returned to the field on which the moonlight had succeeded the long level flush of the set sun.

There lay all the usual amount of death and agony—the sad paraphernalia of war—and the pale dead in every variety of attitude and contortion, so close to each other that in some places one might have stepped from body to body. Already had many been stripped nude as when they came into the world by those wretches who hover like carrion crows on the skirts of an army; and their pale marble skins gleamed horribly white with their black and gaping wounds in the cold moonlight. Amid these many horrors, some phlegmatic German infantry were quietly bivouacking and lighting fires to cook their supper; others lay down weary and worn, their mouths parched with thirst, and their canteens empty, after twelve hours' marching and fighting. As we rode slowly over the field to scare plunderers and protect the wounded, I heard, amid a group of officers whom we passed, one laughing loudly, and found him to be Major Shirley. A revulsion of feeling made the flow of this man's spirits extravagant; and here, amid the rows and piles of dead and wounded—amid the expiring on that solemn, harrowing, and moonlighted plain—he was joking and laughing, like a fool or a drunkard—he, the poltroon, who could not articulate an order when under a fire at noon!

"*His weird is no come yet,*" I heard old Sergeant Duff mutter as we rode on in extended order, our horses sometimes stumbling over what appeared to be a heap of freshly-gathered grain or hemp. These had been uprooted by some kind hand, and spread over a dead comrade to protect or conceal his body from

plunderers; and everywhere lay fragments of exploded shells and the half imbedded cannon-shot that had ploughed up the grass or corn in long furrows. We sought for [and interred, separately, in his cloak, the body of poor Keith, our young lieutenant. Elsewhere the dead were rapidly interred; some by lantern-light, and with them, undistinguished among the rank and file, Prince Xavier of Saxony. One soldier of our 51st got his diamond star, and sold it to a Jew for some hundred pounds, which he spent in six months, keeping the regiment in an uproar while the money lasted; another got his purse, which was filled with louis d'ors; and a third 51st man got his watch, which was studded with brilliants. Some Westphalian boors then stripped the body, which was flung into a pit and interred with about twenty others.

All the churches in Minden and its vicinity were converted into hospitals. The interior of the old Cathedral—whither I rode to inquire after Hob Elliot and some others of ours—presented a very singular scene. It is a dark but stately edifice, said to have been formerly the palace of the Pagan King Wittikind, but was turned by him into a church after his conversion. Along the high-arched Gothic aisles were rows of wounded soldiers, groaning, praying, cursing, and rustling fretfully among the bloody straw on which they lay. Knapsacks, haversacks, and accoutrements hung on every carved knob, and there was not a saint who did not bear a load of sword-belts, bridles, or canteens slung about his neck or piled within his niche, while, in the Gothic porch, the chapter-house, and the painted chapel of our Lady of Minden, stood surgeons' blocks for operations; and there were Dr. Probe and all the medical men of the army busy in their shirt-

sleeves with knife and saw, and up to their bared elbows in blood. There was no time, nor was it then the fashion to reduce fractures; so around each military Æsculapius lay piles of legs, arms, hands, and feet, amputated as fast as their owners could be brought from the field; and these revolting fragments were cast into a corner until they could be carted away to the pits that were being dug by our working parties amid the harvest-fields on the plain of Todtenhausen. But such is War, and such are its grim concomitants.

On the noon of the day after the battle I was proceeding to rejoin the Light Troop which was bivouacked in a hemp-field at some distance from the pits where the dead lay, when two French officers and a trumpeter, all mounted, and accompanied by six dragoons, came suddenly upon me at an angle of the road. As one bore a white banner on a sergeant's pike, I recognised at once a flag of truce, so we simultaneously reined up and courteously saluted each other. One wore the gorgeous uniform of Colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne; the other was a French Hussar officer, in whom I recognised the Chevalier de Boisguiller.

"*Peste ! monsieur,*" said he, "you and I have the luck of meeting in strange places, but seldom under pleasant circumstances. We are in haste, for those we have left behind are not likely to wait for us, pressed as they now are by your cavalry; so, can you direct us to the quarters of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick?"

"With pleasure. You are the bearer——"

"Nay, my friend Monsieur le Comte is bearer of a letter from the Maréchal de Contades, our commander-in-chief, to the Prince, inquiring into the fate of Prince Xavier of Saxony."

"His fate?" I repeated, and shook my head.

"*Oui, monsieur*," said the officer who bore the rank of count, with great earnestness; "if he is wounded we come to offer a suitable equivalent in exchange for him; if, unhappily, killed, to solicit the restoration of his remains, for he is the brother of her Majesty the Queen of France, and I had the honour to be his particular friend."

While we were speaking, a royal coach and six, accompanied by a squadron of French Household Troops, preceded by an officer bearing a white flag, and by four trumpeters, wheeled round the angle of the road and joined us.

"Here comes the Prince's carriage, with Monsieur Monjoy to receive him, whether dead or alive," said Boisguiller.

With some reluctance I informed these officers that I had seen the Prince cut down by one of our own troopers, and almost immediately afterwards pierced by a ball in front of the grenadier company of our 51st Foot; and that his body had been buried with others on the field. This information filled the Frenchman with a sorrow that seemed genuine; and the colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne, a handsome but stern-looking young man, actually wept aloud. Prince Ferdinand, to whose quarters I conducted them, gave orders to open some of the pits in the field; so a working party was detailed, and a search instituted among the naked and mangled dead for the body of the unfortunate Prince. No less than eighty of these horrid graves were unclosed, and their poor occupants pulled by the legs or arms from among the mould and examined before the discovery of the Prince's pickal'd charger in one hecatomb gave hope that his late

rider's remains might be near ; and accordingly in one that was filled with Mousquetaires Gris et Noires, we found a nude and bloody corpse, which all the French officers at once declared to be Prince Xavier of Saxony, stripped even to his boots. He had received a bullet in the left temple, which was his mortal wound. His right arm was found to be broken. This had been done by the sword of Hob Elliot. His fine hair was still neatly dressed, tied by a blue satin ribbon, and powdered with brown *maréchale*. The poor remains were rolled in a large crimson velvet mantle, bearing a royal star, and placed in the coach, which was driven rapidly off, followed by its escort, to which all our guards, sentinels, and out-pickets presented arms.

CHAPTER LI.

THE BRIDGE OF FREYENTHAL.

SEVERE weather succeeded the battle of Minden, and the Scots Greys, while it continued, were ordered to cantonments in villages near the Lahn. On a dull wet morning we paraded in our cloaks and bade adieu to the banks of the Weser, and to the fatal plain of the 1st of August. By sound of trumpet we fell into our ranks, and the corporal-major of each troop proceeded to call the muster-toll. Alas ! there was called over on that morning the name of more than one brave fellow who could respond to it no more, and over whom the autumn grass was sprouting. Amid the snows of winter we idled away our time in those dreary villages of Prussian Westphalia, till Major Shirley arrived with a message of a peculiar nature for Colonel Preston.

Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, to whose staff the major was now attached (Lord Sackville having been summarily dismissed the service by the king) sent him to inform the colonel that in the district named the Rodhargebirge, a certain baron, named Conrad of Freyenthal, had placed his wife in a dungeon or vault of his residence, and kept her a prisoner therein, while a mistress occupied her place, as the ballads say, "in bower and hall." The orders of his royal highness were, that we should send a party there to free and protect the lady, and also to blow up a bridge of the Lahn close by Freyenthal, which had been partially undermined already by M. Monjoy, an engineer of the French rear-guard already mentioned. Guided by a peasant, Colonel Preston went with the Light Troop in person on this service, and as it was not likely to be a desperate one, Major Shirley accompanied us, and contrived to play me a trick which I had reason long to remember. We marched from our cantonment before daybreak, when the sharp crescent moon was waning coldly behind the hills, and the bronze-like conical outlines of the fir-trees cut acute angles against the clear blue sky. After passing through a wooded defile in the mountains, we reached the castle of Freyenthal, a small square tower, surrounded by a barbican wall, and perched on an insulated mass of rock, at the base of which the Lahn poured over a great cascade, that was then almost a mass of icicles.

Close by this tower the river was spanned by the ancient stone bridge which we had such special orders to blow up. Before this feudal fortress we sounded a trumpet thrice, but met with no response, and could see no one, nor any sign of life about the place, save the dark smoke that ascended from the chimneys into

the clear winter sky. The arched gate of the outer wall was strong, and being securely barred within, defied all our efforts. While ten of our men dismounted, and under the order of a German engineer officer proceeded to examine and make use of the old French mine under one of the piers of the bridge, Colonel Preston, whose temper was apt to be chafed by trifles, deliberately blew up the gate of the tower by a petard which he had brought for the express purpose.

Roused from his apathy or his potations by this unexpected explosion, the proprietor of Freyenthal, a stern-looking man, with powdered hair, a hooked nose, and fierce, black, bushy eyebrows, rushed bareheaded and unarmed into the courtyard, accompanied by two or three men-servants of bloated and forbidding appearance. Then Colonel Preston in a few words acquainted him with the orders of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and required the immediate surrender of the baroness — our errand and intention. But undaunted by the colonel's rank and the aspect of his troop of horse crowding all the pathway that led to the tower, the baron roughly taunted him with "unwise interference in domestic affairs, and with being an insolent braggart to boot."

On hearing this, the fiery old man leaped from his horse, tossed its bridle to an orderly, and drawing his sword, offered the baron the use of another, as well as of a pistol, saying—"I scorn to take advantage of any man—we are now on equal terms."

The German uttered a hoarse oath, snatched the pistol, cocked it, and fired straight at the head of Colonel Preston, who would undoubtedly have been shot had I not struck the barrel up with my sword. At the same instant our trumpeter, who was close by

the colonel, struck the would-be assassin to the earth by a blow of his trumpet.

The wife of this most irritable Teuton we found exactly in the plight Shirley had described, immured in a vault, a cold and miserable place, the sole furniture of which was a truckle-bed. We put the baron in her place, and sent her, by her own request, to the Lutheran Convent at Marburg, while her rival was made to ride the *cheval de bois* for an hour, with a carbine slung at each foot. While the baron's Westphalian wine and beer were freely brought from his cellar for the use of the troop; while he growled and swore in his vault, and while the bridge of the Lahn was being undermined, Colonel Preston desired me to take ten men with me, and ride a mile or two into the country on the other side of the river, to reconnoitre the district, to see or inquire about the disposition of the enemy, but to avoid all risk.

"Come, Gauntlet," said Shirley, as I tightened my waistbelt and put my foot in the stirrup; "take a parting cup ere you go."

"Excuse me, major," said I, coldly; "I have had wine already—and the hour is not yet noon."

"Toast Miss Gauntlet, man—Zounds! here in Westphalia, so far away from Old England. To your fair cousin's health!" he exclaimed, holding out a silver-rimmed horn of wine.

"To Aurora, then!" said I, and drained the wine, after clinking our horns together in true German fashion, while Shirley's usual smile expanded into a laugh, and when he laughed it always portended mischief.

"Come, my lads," said I, to my chosen ten; "forward—trot!"

"Don't ride too far, Gauntlet," cried Shirley, still laughing loudly, "for the bridge is quite undermined."

"How that fool laughs at his own folly!" thought I, as we crossed the antique bridge at a hard trot, and rode into the frozen country beyond. From the bank of the Lahn the ground sloped gradually upwards for miles, though intersected here and there by thickly-wooded ravines: thus, as we traversed the snow, when looking back we could distinctly see the old tower of Freyenthal, standing dark and grim with its smoky chimneys above the half-frozen river. The country seemed partially deserted, and any peasants or woodcutters who saw us, fled at our approach, and concealed themselves. We rode several miles, and by the wayside passed the ruins of many roofless cottages and deserted farms; but now Hob Elliot assured me that in the clear frosty air he "more than once had heard the rumble of wheels—perhaps of artillery."

As we saw nothing even in the most distant portion of the level and snow-clad landscape, I ridiculed this notion; but Hob was obstinate, and stuck to his fears on the subject.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, "but I know that I may take the liberty of talking to *you*, for when I lay in hospital at Minden, wounded, sick, and dying as I thought, no hand was more ready than yours to help me. Never did my auld mother at hame tread mair lightly by my cradle than you did by my straw pallet, to see that I took those devilish draughts of old Drs. Blackstrap and Probe of ours."

"But what about all that now, Hob?—to the point."

"Well, sir, if I might recommend—I'm an older soldier than you—we should go threes about now, and

get back, for the bridge is undermined, and that Major Shirley——”

“Well?” said I, as Hob paused.

“He had a queer twinkle in his eye as we rode off.”

“What, Hob—you do not mean—you cannot insinuate——”

“Pardon me, sir,” said the big, burly trooper, lowering his voice; “but he laughed in the faces of the dead at Minden—faces that in life he was grave enough before, and I dinna like a bane in his body.”

“Come, come, Hob, you must not speak in this way to me. The major is esteemed a good officer.”

“I know that, sir,” replied the trooper, dryly; “but by whom?”

“Well,” said I, impatiently, “by whom?”

“The worst men in the army.”

“Hum—he is a brave man at all events, Hob.”

“Yes, sir—we all saw that when he bungled the orders for Lord George Sackville at Minden, and cost the poor general his commission—he that was there under fire, as brave as a lion, in the old red coat that he had worn at Fontenoy.”

“Good or bad, Hob, brave or not, it is perilous work for you to speak thus of an officer.”

“Well, sir, I beg your pardon; but I can’t help having my own thoughts of him, and they are *unco queer ones*.”

Just as he said this we reached the brow of an eminence, over which the road dipped suddenly down into a hollow; and there just beneath us, we saw a train of some thirty laden waggons, proceeding leisurely under an escort of at least three companies of French troops, the *Volontaires de Clermont*. Thus the rumble of wheels so long heard by Hob, was now completely

accounted for! The French uttered a shout on beholding us, and proceeded to handle their muskets, by priming, loading, and casting about, while we wheeled round our horses and departed without further ceremony to reach the bridge of Lahn. A hundred or more of the French tossed aside their knapsacks, and everything that might encumber them, and rushed up the slope to the crest of the eminence. Here they poured a confused volley after us which did no harm, but I could see the bullets ripping up the frozen snow in front. Then with a yell the *Volontaires* dashed after us in pursuit. A partial thaw made portions of the snow-covered road deep and heavy, but we soon left the French infantry far in our rear, though they continued to follow us double quick, determined to have a little shooting if possible, as they had enjoyed none since the day of Minden. We soon distanced them more than a mile, and ere long saw the tower of Freyenthal dotted with the red coats of our comrades, and with rather anxious eyes I measured the long slope that lay between us and the bridge, where we could see our working party, now that their mining task was over, sitting on the parapets in their shirt-sleeves, and conversing. Near them, on horseback, was an officer, in whom, by his kevenhüller, hat and scarlet feather, I had no difficulty in recognising Major Shirley. As we came on at a hand-gallop, we suddenly saw a commotion among our men at the bridge as they pointed towards the enemy. Then Shirley seemed to gesticulate violently, and order them to fall back, waving a match which he had snatched from one of them, and which was smoking in his hand. We saw him stoop from his saddle and fire the train! In a minute after this there was a roar in the still air;

amid a cloud of dust and smoke the old bridge of the Lahn rose bodily aloft, almost in a solid mass, and then sank in foam and ruin among the blocks of melting ice that rolled over the cascade below.

"Treachery," cried Hob Elliot, shaking his clenched and gauntleted hand; he has blown up the bridge and cut off our retreat!"

In another moment we all reined up our breathless horses at the edge of the steep rocks, through which the swollen winter stream was roaring and boiling in its mad career towards the Rhine.

"In the name of Heaven," I exclaimed, filled with anger and apprehension, "why has this been done? Wascals, who ordered this—you have ruined us."

"Major Shirley is alone to blame, sir, not we," replied a sergeant on the other side; and though the stream that roared between us was only thirty yards broad, the nature of its banks and its force defied all attempts to cross by swimming.

"It is most unfortunate, my dear Gauntlet," cried Shirley, with a bland and broader smile than usual on his face—"most unfortunate affair—the more so as the enemy are coming rapidly on."

"But sirrah, what in the world tempted you to commit this act of folly?" I demanded, furiously.

"My dear fellow—ah, ah! you should remember the old saw—in this world expect everything, and be astonished at nothing. I crave your pardon, as it is not pleasant to have one's promotion stopped, and be a prisoner of war. 'Twas all a mistake—a deuced error in judgment, as the Court said which shot Admiral Byng. But don't attempt to swim the river," he exclaimed, on seeing that in my fury I made my horse rear wildly up; "it is too broad, too deep and rapid

Surrender with a good grace—discretion is the better part of valour. Here come the French Light Troops. Zounds! and they are firing, too!" And with an ironical smile, he waved his hand with a mock salute, and somewhat hastily entered the tower of Frayenthal, for a few scattered files of the Volontaires de Clermont, when they came up, opened a fire upon our men, who, in bewilderment at the whole affair, were loitering at the other end of the ruined bridge.

"I have swam baith Esk and Liddle in full flood, and damn me if I wont swim this!" exclaimed Hob Elliot, who was about to spur his horse madly into the stream, when I caught his bridle. And thus, in less than five minutes, with my ten troopers, I found myself disarmed, dismounted, and marched off a prisoner of war, in presence of Colonel Preston and the remainder of the Light Troop, through the cowardice or treachery—I knew not which—of Shirley the aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER LII.

LES VOLONTAIRES DE CLERMONT.

My handsome grey trooper was bestrode by a dapper little French sous-lieutenant, who seemed to enjoy the ride amazingly, all the more that I, a *sacré Anglais*, trudged by his side in my boots, secured to the stirrup-leather by a cord. Fords on the river there were none near; thus, as we were marched off, we knew that all the courage of our comrades, and the skill and energy of Colonel Preston, could avail us nothing. Of all my party I was the most depressed; but big Hob Elliot was the most vituperative, and swore at our bad

luck and at our captors, in terms which fortunately they did not understand.

"The devil!" he muttered; "if they discover 'twas I who encountered their favourite Prince Xavier, and gave him that Lockerbie lick in front of the 51st, they will shoot me off hand like a hoodiecrow."

"Unless we tell them, they can never know; and if they did, your fears are unnecessary, Hob. The French are too brave to resent what was done in fair fight."

"Gude wot, I did all I could to spare the puir body. My father, who was a smith at Cannobie, in Liddesdale, used to say that 'mony a stout trooper has been lost for lack of a nail;' but by the horns of auld Cloutie, here are ten of us and a cornet lost for lack of a little prudence."

"Prudence—a nail—what the devil are you talking about, Hob?" said I, angrily.

"Weel, sir, for lack of a nail the shoe was lost, and for lack of the shoe the horse; and for want of his horse the trooper came to grief, being overtaken in his boots and slain by the enemy. And all this came about by the lack of a nail in his horse's shoe—sae quoth my faither the smith."

"And thus, Hob, if I understand your parable, you think that for lack of a little prudence you have all lost your liberty, and I my promotion and liberty for years to come?"

"Just so. Had we gone threes about at the time I ventured to hint it, we would have been on the other side of the river wi' auld Geordie Preston just now. But as for years, sir, dinna speak o' years," he exclaimed, clenching a huge bony hand that must often have swung the great hammer in his father's forge, and

at the village games : "there's not a prison in a' France, e'en the *Basteel* itsel', that will haud Hob Elliot gin he wants to win oot."

My anger at Shirley was deep—too deep for me to express to my companions in misfortune. I remembered how he had withheld the letter of Aurora, from the time we were quartered in Alphen, until the morning of Minden ; how, on this very day, he had smilingly warned me to remember that the bridge of Freyenthal was undermined ; how I had seen him gesticulating with our men, and had witnessed their hesitation ere he snatched the match from one and sprung the mine ! I saw more clearly than ever that he loved my cousin ; that he thought he viewed in me a rival, and believed that he had now fully provided for me for some time at least, if not for ever, as few could tell what might be the dangers and contingencies of a military imprisonment in France. Then occurred an idea under which I writhed anew. That after enduring perhaps years of captivity—years during which my comrades of the Greys would be playing the great game of war and glory—years that would see my brother subalterns all captains and field-officers, I might be transmitted with others home to find myself a cornet still, and a penniless one, too, while, probably, Shirley the poltroon, who had worked me as much evil (just as his brother had done poor Charters) might be the husband of Aurora, and the proprietor of my patrimony—of Netherwood, its hall and fields, wood and wold ! With this chain of thought burning within me I turned fiercely and looked back to the old tower of Freyenthal. Across the snow-clad landscape it was distinctly visible, with a group of red-coats near it ; but I was not permitted

to loiter, as a tug of the cord which secured me to my horse warned me that the rider was impatient, and compelled me to trudge on. We soon reached the train of waggons which were halted in the ravine, and amid the creaking of whips, and much noisy congratulation and laughter, the escort of the *Volontaires de Clermont* resumed their route, we knew not and cared not whither. Among the officers who accompanied this party I observed one, a fair-haired young man, of very prepossessing aspect, who checked his horse for a moment, and regarded me attentively.

"Monsieur l'officier," said he, lifting his hat, "we have surely had the pleasure of meeting before?"

"You were one of those who came with the flag of truce to Minden," said I, responding to his salute.

"Exactly, monsieur—for the body of Prince Xavier—ah, diable! a sad business that was" (at the prince's name Hob Elliot looked about him as if preparing to fight or flee). "I am M. Monjoy, of the French Engineer department."

I bowed, on which he again uncovered his head with that genuine politeness and grace which were so charming in the French officers of the old school.

"Monsieur le lieutenant," said he, turning sharply to the dapper little subaltern who had assumed a right of property in my person, and saying something—I know not what—rapidly in French. On this, the cord which secured me to the stirrup-leather of my own saddle was undone, and I was permitted to march at my ease, but the horse itself my captor resolutely refused to give up. I found the young engineer Monjoy a very pleasant companion. He was grave, earnest, and rational—quite unlike Boisguiller and many other French officers whom I had met. He held out hopes

that I should soon be exchanged (so much the worse for *you*, Major Shirley, thought I), as we had so many of King Louis' officers in our hands, among the 5000 prisoners taken in the town of Minden. He said many other cheering things, and insisted on sharing with me the contents of his haversack (German sausage and biscuits) and of his canteen; and I remained by his side, during a long, slow, and bitterly cold day's march, which brought us to the little town of Ysembourg, whose prince had been slain at the battle of Minden. His castle, a famous old fortress, crowns the summit of a hill near Corbach. The French standard was flying on it, and there, next morning, we were conducted with several other prisoners, chiefly Black Hussars of the Prussian army, under an escort of the Volontaires de Clermont. The morning was chilly and depressing; a dense frosty mist covered all the ground; we were without cloaks, without breakfast, cold and miserable; and gloomily we looked at each other as we trod up the snow-clad hill, till we neared the gate of the castle, at which stood two sentinels of the Regiment de Bretagne, muffled in their greatcoats, all whitened by the frost-rime, which seemed to have edged their three-cocked hats as with silver lace. While we were ascending, one of our escort suddenly perceived a ring on my right hand. It was the emerald given to me by Jacqueline on that morning when first we met—when I had saved her life near St. Malo; and now the rascal demanded it at once and most peremptorily too. I declined to comply, on which, with great deliberation, he cocked his piece, drew his thumb-nail across the edge of the flint, to ensure its not missing fire, and deliberately placed the muzzle to my head. Whether

or not the fellow would have dared to shoot an officer who was a prisoner of war, I cannot say, but on finding myself so vehemently pressed I drew off the ring, which he at once clutched, and put in his haversack, with a laugh and an oath, little foreseeing how dear the bauble was to cost him. At that moment a blow from behind stretched him on the earth. It was dealt by the clenched hand of Hob Elliot, who, poor fellow, ran imminent danger, for a dozen of fixed bayonets were directly levelled at him breast high, and he would have been instantly immolated, had not an officer of rank, accompanied by M. Gervais Monjoy, rushed forward from the castle-gate, by their influence and authority to stop the brawl. In the officer I recognised the count who had come with Monjoy for Prince Xavier's body, and who had been so deeply moved on beholding his remains exhumed on the field. To him I was about to prefer a complaint of the robbery, when he hurriedly turned away, having other matters to attend to, and I was left with the plunderer, who had divined my intention, and tapping the butt of his firelock, gave me a threatening grimace, so much as to say "Beware!" Soon after this I was conducted into an ante-room, and thus separated from the rest of the prisoners, who were marched into the interior of the castle. As the ten men of the Greys left me, each came forward in succession and saluted me as I shook hands with them all, and some said—"God bless you, sir; I hope we shall soon meet again." A hope—save in one instance—never realized by these worthy fellows, as nine of them died in French prisons, I know not where or how—probably at Bitscheor or Verdun.

The room in which I found myself appeared to be a kind of ante-chamber. Its windows were barred

and a sentinel with his bayonet fixed paced to and fro monotonously outside. Within were tables littered with letters, order-books, and several orderlies with canes and side-arms were loitering about on forms and benches.

"Who commands here?" I inquired of one.

"Monseigneur le Duc de Broglie," replied the soldier, with a polite bow; "this chateau of the prince of Ysembourg is his head-quarters, and in a few minutes monsieur will have the honour of being brought before him."

At that moment I heard a voice at some distance say with a tone of authority, "Monsieur le Comte de Bourgneuf, *bring in your prisoner.*"

At this unpleasant conjunction of names I felt my heart beat quick, and then I saw the colonel of the Regiment de Bretagne, the stern-looking bearer of the flag of truce, beckoning me follow him. I did so, and in another moment found myself in the presence of the famous Maréchal Duc de Broglie—the father of Jacqueline!

CHAPTER LIII.

THE DUC DE BROGLIE.

THERE was one other present whom I could very well have spared—the Count de Bourgneuf—the stern young colonel, who eyed me steadily with a glance of a very mingled cast—at least, I thought so, for he was the husband of Jacqueline de Broglie. The Duke, her father, a venerable and stately soldier, who wore the uniform of a maréchal of France, but of a fashion somewhat old, received me with a polite salute. The room in which we met was a vaulted chamber of the old castle. In a corner thereof stood a *cornette*, a

standard peculiar to the French Light Cavalry, and from its pole there still hung the white silk scarf which was usually tied to these cornettes when the dragoons went into action, to render them conspicuous, so that they might be rallied round it; and this scarf had doubtless been there since the duke's own regiment had fled at a gallop from Minden. In a corner were embroidered the initials "J. de B." Had Jacqueline's fair fingers worked that scarf and standard? In another corner stood a pair of kettledrums and a few muskets. A table, whereon lay some maps of Germany, several French newspapers—bundles of dispatches and writing materials stood near the arched Gothic fireplace. A few antique chairs were round it, and on these were seated two or three field officers of the Regiment de Bretagne, Monjoy, the engineer, and the Comte de Bourgneuf all in full uniform, powdered and aiguilletted, with their swords, sashes, and orders on. All these details I saw at a glance, and again my eyes rested on the benign face of the old Duc de Broglie, in whom, however, I failed to trace any resemblance to his daughter. At the door of the room stood a sentinel of the Volontaires de Clermont, with his musket "ordered" and bayonet fixed—the same fellow who had so violently possessed himself of my emerald ring.

"Monsieur le prisonnier is an officer?" said the Duke, bowing again.

"I have the honour," said I, while Bourgneuf eyed me superciliously through his eyeglass.

"In the British service, as I see by your uniform."

"The *Ecossais Gris*."

"*Bien!*" said the Duke, smiling; "I remember some of them. Your rank?"

"Cornet,"

"Ah—it is unfortunate to be taken thus, with a rank so junior ; an old fellow like me might wish for a rest ; but you—ah monsieur ! you may be long a prisoner if this war continues."

My heart sank at this remark, but I said, "I am not without hope of effecting an exchange."

"You were taken prisoner at the bridge of the Lahn?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Your people blew it up, M. Monjoy says. How was it that they did so without permitting you to re-pass it?"

"I know not, monseigneur," said I, for I would not own in that place that a British officer would act so basely as Shirley had done. The Duke repeated his question, but I simply bowed with the same answer.

"What forces are there?" he inquired.

"Only the Light Troop of my regiment—the 2nd Dragoons, or *Ecosais Gris*."

"The rest of the Regiment?"

"Are cantoned further down the river."

"Your strength, monsieur?" continued the Duke, glancing at a paper on the table.

"Six troops."

"That we know," said Count Bourgneuf, brusquely, "there is a troop of your Scottish Grey Horse in each of the six villages along the Lahn ; but what is their numerical strength?"

"I have had no means of knowing since our rapid pursuit at Minden," said I, with reserve.

De Bourgneuf eyed me fiercely ; but the Duke smiled, and asked, "Where are the other regiments of milord Granby's Cavalry division?"

"I beg to be excused giving such information," replied I.

"Then, monsieur," said the Duke, suavely, "have you any idea of when Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick proposes to break up from winterquarters and take the field?"

"Happily I have no means of knowing — being merely a subaltern officer ; but," added I, haughtily, "if I *did* know, most assuredly I should decline informing the General of the enemy !"

"*Très bien*—of course," said the old Duke, shrugging his shoulders.

"Beware, sir !" said the Comte de Bourgneuf, with a dark frown on his stern visage ; "you would not tell, even if you knew, say you ?"

"No, by Heaven !" said I, loftily.

"Monseigneur le Duc, have I your permission to summon a file of the guard with a piece of cord ? *Ha, coquin !*" he added, imperiously turning to me, "I have ere now forced a more unwilling tongue to speak, by tying a cord round a prisoner's head, and wrenching it with my pistol-barrel or sword-hilt till half the scalp came off. And this I did in a district named the Morbihan, a part of France with which you once affected to be familiar."

This remark, and the keen, feverish glance which accompanied it, showed me at once that I stood on perilous ground.

"M. le Comte," exclaimed Monjoy, "bethink you of what you say and do. Monsieur is a prisoner of war. *Ma foi !* this will never pass."

"When I have been robbed by a French soldier under arms I need not be surprised by this display of ruffianism in one of his officers," said I, calmly, while my heart swelled with anger and apprehension. The Count started to his feet ; but the Duke raised his hand and voice authoritatively :

"Halt, Bourgneuf. In this matter your zeal goes beyond my wishes. But how say you, monsieur?" he added, turning sharply to me; "you speak of being robbed. Who has robbed you?"

"Men of the regiment of Count de Clermont, deprived me of my cloak, of my haversack—there was little in it, save three days' half-rations; of my purse—there was little in it, so they were welcome to that, too; but this man, who is now sentinel at your door, with the muzzle of his cocked musket at my head, robbed me of a valuable ring, on which, for the memory of past days, I set a singular value."

Such was my dread of M. de Bourgneuf, that circumstanced as I then was I dared not tell when, or where, or for what service I had received the ring.

"Is this true, fellow?" demanded the Duke, turning sternly to the sentinel, who was too terrified to reply either in the affirmative or the negative.

"You will find it in his haversack," said I.

De Bourgneuf, without ceremony, plunged his hand into the canvas bag which was slung over the poor wretch's right shoulder, and among his ration biscuits, hair and shoe-brushes, &c., drew forth the ring, which he handed to the Duke. On beholding it the latter started and visibly changed colour.

"Is this your ring, monsieur?" he asked, while surveying me and it alternately.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with growing perplexity; "this is most singular—most marvellous! Whence had you this ring? for on my honour as peer and *maréchal* of France, it belonged to my dead wife, and was my parting gift to my dear daughter when I left Paris to command the army in Germany."

"I got it, monseigneur, while serving with the first expedition to Brittany," said I, evasively, and to gather time for thought, as the sharp glittering eyes of Bourgneuf were fixed on me with stern scrutiny.

"May I inquire from whom?"

"From Mademoiselle Jacqueline De Broglie on the morning when I saved her life from a galley-slave, a felon escaped from St. Malo, named Theophile Hautois, whom I afterwards flung into the Black Torrent at St. Aubin du Cormier."

"*Mon Dieu !*" exclaimed the Duke.

"*Très bon !* Marvellous !" added Monjoy, and all present save Bourgneuf, who muttered audibly the offensive epithet, "*Marmiton !*"

"I have heard of some of those things," said the Duke, extending his hands to me, "and so I pray you to keep the ring and accept my sincere gratitude for your brave protection of my child. Comte Guillaume De Boisguiller, our kinsman, who commands at St. Malo, has told me of those passages. Bourgneuf, have you nothing to say to the protector of Jacqueline—of *your wife ?*"

The count had heard, perhaps, more than I wished, for he merely made a French grimace, and presented two fingers of his hand, and then turned on his heel.

"Monsieur le prisonnier," said the Duke, "you shall dine with me to-day. To-morrow you shall be sent across the Lahn to your regiment free, and you will have no reason to forget your interview with the Maréchal De Broglie ; but meanwhile you shall see how we in France punish the soldier who dishonours his colours, and degrades himself by acts of plunder. Count, make that sentinel a prisoner ; assemble a

drumhead court-martial, and desire the drummers of the *Volontaires de Clermont* to beat to arms."

The Count retired. A great bustle reigned for a time in the castle of Ysembourg. The man who had plundered me was taken into a room adjoining that in which the Duke continued to write his letters and orders, and to take a pinch of rappee from time to time while conversing most affably with me; and I could glean that Madame De Bourgneff had never informed him of my enacting the part of her niece's soubrette. How the Count knew of it was more than I could learn; but his grim hint about "the Morbihan" sufficed to show that he knew all. The Duke abstained from all reference to military matters, save a few remarks about the new and then famous Prussian discipline and manœuvres. I listened to the old man with pleasure, and looked forward with joy and impatience to my rejoining the Greys, and to the punishment I meant to inflict upon Major Shirley. Meanwhile I heard the tread of feet, the clatter of accoutrements, and loud words of command uttered where the *Volontaires de Clermont* were parading in open column of companies on the plateau before the gate. The trial was soon over, as the sentence had been resolved on even before the drumhead court had assembled. The battalion formed a hollow square, and then the Duke led me to a window from whence I could see the whole parade and ceremony. A sergeant of the company, to which the culprit belonged, led him into the centre in heavy marching order, and fully accoutred, but having his arms tied with a rope. The brief proceedings of the court and its sentence were read by the adjutant, and then the sergeant said in a loud voice—

"Finding thee, Silvain de Pricorbin, unworthy to bear arms, we thus degrade and render thee incapable of carrying them."

He then took the musket from his shoulder backwards, cut away his epaulettes and knapsack, drew off his cross-belts, sword and bayonet, and giving him a most deliberate kick upon the hinder part of his person, repeated—

"Te trouvant indigne de porter les armes, nous t'en dégradons. So thus art thou, Silvain de Pricorbin, degraded—begone !"

The sergeant then withdrew, on which the provost marshal advanced and laid his hand upon the poor pale wretch, whom, to my dismay, I saw hanged upon a tree about fifty yards from the gates, and in presence, it would seem, of a brother. The drums beat a ruffle ; all was over, and the *Volontaires de Clermont* were dismissed to resume their games of piquet, trictrac, or dominoes, and to smoke and joke in the frosty sunshine, as if nothing so terrible had occurred ; and so ended the first episode of my compulsory visit to the old castle of Ysembourg.

CHAPTER LIV.

AN OLD FRIEND ARRIVES.

ACCORDING to his invitation, I dined with the brave Duc de Broglie, in the hall of the old Schloss, the walls and roof of which still bore all the frescoes, heraldic devices and ornaments with which Count Josias had decorated it many years before. Bourgneuf declined to be present, and I cannot say that I regretted his absence ; but we had M. Monjoy and some officers of

the Regiments of Clermont and Bretagne, all pleasant, gay and affable men save the engineer, who was somewhat reserved, even sad in manner. The Duke talked freely of the folly and loss of life occasioned by our unmeaning expeditions to the coast of France, and dilated particularly on the third (a service which the Greys escaped, by receiving the route for Germany), which ended in the unfortunate battle of St. Cas, where General Durie, Sir John Armitage, and one thousand of our finest troops, particularly of the 1st Foot Guards, were slaughtered on the beach, while four hundred were drowned in their disastrous flight. Minden, however, he and those present tacitly ignored; the defeat there was too recent to be a pleasant French souvenir. He spoke frequently and always with praise of my regiment, the *Ecossais Gris*, which he knew well, having often encountered them on service. He knew Colonel Preston, too, and laughed at his quaint old buff coat. He had met the corps at Dettingen, and acknowledged that it was from *his* hand that one of the Greys wrenched away the famous White Standard—the *Cornette Blanche*—of the Gendarmes du Roi, and he perfectly remembered the retort made by Colonel Preston to Louis Philippe Duc d'Orleans, at the review of the Scots Greys in Hyde Park.

“A greater dishonour than the loss of that banner was never suffered by the Household Cavalry of France,” continued the Duc de Broglie; “the *Cornette Blanche* is a royal standard, which was substituted for the ancient *Pannon Royal*, and was never unfurled save when the king in person led the army; those who served immediately under it were the princes, nobles, and *maréchals* of France, with old field-officers who received orders from his Majesty direct; so mes-

sieurs, you may imagine what I felt on finding myself unhorsed, and seeing it borne through the slaughter in the hands of a Scottish Grey trooper!"

Amid all the topics which we discussed over the wine of the defunct Prince of Ysembourg, with the contents of whose cellars Monseigneur le Duc and his staff made most free, I could glean nothing about Jacqueline, where she resided, how she had married her cousin, the stern Count, or why, or wherefore; nor did I venture to ask—a natural delicacy, with a difficulty of approaching the subject, together with something of pique, restrained me. When I looked on the old Duc de Broglie, dispensing the honours of his table with an air so courtly in his powdered hair, with his star and ribbon of St. Louis, and when I thought of the passionate love I had borne his daughter, and how she had responded to it—how I had sorrowed for her supposed death, and so terribly avenged it—I asked of myself, were not all those days we had spent together at that quaint chateau in Brittany, amid its arbours trained by old Urbain, its rose-gardens and leafy labyrinth, a dream, or was I dreaming *now*? That she should be the wife of this Count de Bourgneuf—a Frenchman all the more jealous because his mother was a Spanish lady of Alava—who knew more than I wished him to know about those love passages in Brittany, and thus hated me accordingly, seemed strange and difficult to realize; but of that hate I had good proof ere long.

Dinner was nearly over when the Chevalier de Boisguiller, of the Hussars *de la Reine*, was announced, and this gay fellow, all travel-stained and with his face looking very red, after a long ride against a keen, frosty wind, entered with his sabre under his left arm,

and carrying his fur cap with plume and scarlet kalpeck, in his right hand.

"Welcome, kinsman Guillaume," said the host, rising, and presenting his hand; "what news bring you from the head-quarters of M. de Contades?"

"This despatch, monseigneur," replied the hussar, delivering an oblong letter, and making a profound salute.

"When did you leave?"

"This morning, monseigneur."

"*Ma foi!* you must have come at a good pace to reach Ysembourg by this time."

"I dined early at Helingenstadt, and when I have dined well and drunk good wine, somehow my horse always goes well. The wine communicates itself through the spur-rowels, I think. 'Tis sixty miles and more from Helingenstadt to this, so as the sight of these viands makes me hungry again, I shall join you gentlemen. Thus hunger, a long ride over a snow-covered country—snow—*ouf!* it is six feet deep at Hesse Cassel—with a young appetite, are capital sauce to a meal, and if your cook equals your maître d'hôtel, my dear maréchal—*Grands Dieux!* what have we here?—a ragoût—delightful!—gigot de mouton, with force-meat balls, like grape and canister shot. Monjoy, I shall trouble you for a slice. *Parbleu!* my friends, where did you pick up all these dainties? I thought those active devils, the Black Hussars of his Prussian Majesty, had swept everything but snow and icicles out of Hesse and Westphalia. Monjoy, *mon cher*, what does that silver jug contain?"

"Champagne-punch, chevalier."

"Made how?"

"One bottle of claret to three of champagne, with

some sugar, a little hot-water, a squeeze or so of a lemon, and after a few glasses——”

“One may see all the sentinels and outposts double their *usual* number, and the main body quite what M. le Maréchal wishes it to be, before beating up the quarters of Prince Ferdinand, *mon brave* ; hand it over here !”

“*Pardieu !*” he exclaimed, setting down the silver jug after a long draught, “what do I see—Monsieur Gauntlet, of the Grey Seots—a prisoner, eh? In the dusk I took you in your red coat for a mousquetaire rouge.”

“Monsieur is a prisoner, who, for the service he has done my family, returns free to the allied lines to-morrow,” said the Duke, who had been rapidly skimming the despatch. “I must leave you, messieurs ; Monjoy will take my place at the head of the table, as this despatch requires immediate attention. Contades returns to France for a time ; the entire command is vested in me, and the army is to be augmented to a hundred thousand men, while thirty thousand more are to be formed upon the Rhine, under the orders of the Comte St. Germain. My brother’s regiment of Cuirassiers must ride towards Wetzlar, as the King of Prussia’s Death’s-head Hussars are marching in that direction. We move from this early——”

Loud cries of “Bravo—Vive le Roi ! Vive le Maréchal Duc !” rung round the table.

“And the castles of Masburg and Dillenburg may soon have some powder burnt before them. You see, M. Gauntlet, I have no secrets from you, though you were so reserved with me this morning. Adieu, messieurs—make yourselves at home ; I am an old campaigner, but must keep my head clear for the work of

the bureau." And with a smiling bow the stately old maréchal left us. Then around the table the conversation became more free and unrestrained; the wine-decanter was circulated with rapidity, and, as usual with Frenchmen, they all talked at once without listening much to each other.

CHAPTER LV.

MONJOY.

WHEN most of the officers had withdrawn, Monjoy drew close to me and said—"There is more in the Maréchal's despatch than met our ears—matters not pleasant to the pride of de Broglie."

"How?" said I.

"You must know, monsieur, that since the time that Prince Ferdinand possessed himself of the castle of Marburg, and indeed ever since Minden, Maréchal de Contades has been very unpopular with our troops. He charged the Duc de Broglie with misconduct. The Duc recriminated, and gained credit with the Court at Versailles, when a victim was required to satisfy popular clamour. That victim was M. de Contades, so our camp, like your own, in the case of milord Sackville, has not been without dissensions. But permit me to inquire, did you ever meet the Comte de Bourgneuf before that day when we came for the body of Prince Xavier of Saxony?"

"No—but why do you ask?"

"*Parbleu!*—'tis strange! and you never did him any wrong?" continued Monjoy, earnestly.

"Wrong—I know of none; but wherefore these inquiries?" said I.

"Because during the execution of that *Volontaire de Clermont*——"

"The poor wretch who appropriated my ring?"

"Yes—well, I overheard him swear in a low voice, to Armand de Pricorbin, who accompanied his brother Silvain to the gallows, that you should never reach the allied lines alive, and the man gave him a fierce and rapid glance, as much as to say, *we* understand each other. I was not supposed to observe or to overhear all this, and could neither control nor take the Count, my superior officer, to task for it."

"But I shall—he is not my superior officer. I thank you, M. Monjoy, and shall challenge him for this," said I, wrathfully.

"You would be extremely rash, and if a duel ensued the Duc de Broglie would severely punish the survivor, especially one in your circumstances."

"Then what is to be done, for at this moment a plot for my assassination may be forming?"

"Return as quickly as possible to the other side of the Lahn," said Boisguiller, who had listened in silence to the foregoing. "I know more of this matter than you, Monjoy, and while disapproving of the sentiments of my kinsman, de Bourgneuf, am most anxious to serve M. Gauntlet, as an old friend who saved and served me when in a desperate and degrading position. *Grands Dieux!* I am not likely to forget that prison-slavery, the *Amster.* for some time to come!"

For a minute or more, I remained in doubt what to do. My first idea suggested a report of the affair to the Duc de Broglie; but that would avail me little unless he gave me an armed escort, to apply for which would argue either guilt or timidity. To take the count bluntly and boldly to task would be perilous

work ; and to seek an interview with Jacqueline, his countess, and beg *her* advice in the matter—even if I knew where she resided—was a measure more perilous still, and one to be dreaded.

“You really think that Bourgneuf is capable of having me waylaid and cut off?” said I.

“Quite,” replied Monjoy ; “excuse me talking thus of your kinsman, Boisguiller ; but his mother was an Espagnole of Alava, and we all know the spirit he is likely to inherit. My advice to you is, monsieur, immediately on receiving the signed passport of the Duc de Broglie, to set out ostensibly for Hesse Cassel—observe this map ; it is about seven leagues from here, according to Hermann Mall. But go not there ; strike off towards Frankenburg, and push on for the Lahn, while Bourgneuf and his people may be searching for you in the direction of the Weser.”

“And pray start to-night, and *bon voyage, mon ami!*” said Boisguiller, draining his glass.

“In my ignorance of the country and the language—on foot too—I shall never reach the Lahn alone.”

“Of course not, *mon camarade*, we never meant you to do so,” replied Monjoy. “Boisguiller cannot accompany you, as he returns to Heliugenstadt to-morrow ; but I shall do so with pleasure, at least a few leagues of the way, for to-morrow at noon I have to lay before the Duc de Broglie plans of the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, with the intended approaches and lines of circumvallation.”

I was thanking this frank friend in suitable terms, when a gold locket became disengaged from the ribbon by which it was suspended at his neck, and fell at my feet. When handing it across the table to him I could

perceive that it contained the miniature of a girl, young, lovely, and fairhaired.

"*Morbleu!* Gervais Monjoy," exclaimed Boisguiller; "is it thus, my fine fellow, that you treasure the image of Madame d'Escombas?"

"Madame! is this girl, a child almost, married?" said I, perhaps imprudently.

"Hush, gentlemen—hush, for God's sake and for hers—upon your honour, hush!" said Monjoy, in a husky voice, as he replaced the locket in his breast, and his cheek grew very pale.

"I know your sad story, and hers too," said the chevalier; "but are you wise to carry this trinket about with you?"

"'Tis all of her that evil fate has left me!" sighed Monjoy, filling his glass with wine.

"But—but suppose you were killed in action, and this portrait was found upon you?"

"Well?"

"Would it not compromise the honour of madame?"

"With none who knew our wretched history," replied Monjoy, in a broken voice, and with a tremulous manner; "but let us return to the affair of our friend."

"The Duc de Broglie knows not all the *on dits* of Paris and Versailles," said the chevalier. "The old man thinks only of brigades and squadrons, of advances and retreats, and of pontoon-bridges on the Rhine and Weser; but a word in your ear, M. Gauntlet: if he knew all that was reported, you might perhaps not have fared quite so well in Ysembourg to-day."

"I do not comprehend," said I, coldly.

"Well, *mon ami*, it was reported in the *Chroniques*

Scandaleuses at Versailles and Paris, that the young countess, then Mademoiselle de Broglie, had a lover disguised as her *soubrette*, and that the fellow actually carried her off. Thus you see how rumour wove you and the outlaw Hautois into one."

"Rumour might have added, that it was revenge for Bourgneuf's abduction of the sister of Hautois and the demolition of his mother's cottage that made this man the wretch we found him," said I, bitterly. "But oh! Boisguiller," I added, suddenly and passionately, "you know the truth and the falsehood of this affair; you must know that I loved Jacqueline purely and honourably, that I loved her to despair, and how I sorrowed for her supposed death!"

"*Ah, mon garçon!* I cheated you nicely at that old *chaumière* in the wood, and all for the best, was it not? But pray don't give way to such outbursts here; *ma foi!* no, they will never do; so be wary and be off, ere worse come to pass. Bourgneuf has some fellows in his Regiment de Bretagne who would skin their own fathers—people from his own estates, who would chop you into mincemeat if such were his supreme will and pleasure, and if quietly shooting you down did not suit his purpose quite as well."

I took another glass of wine and snapped my fingers, as a spirit of bravado next possessed me. "Tell me, is the countess here?" I asked.

"Madame de Bourgneuf, *née* Broglie? well, she is not exactly at Ysembourg, but we shall not say where. Awkward, is it not?" said the chevalier.

"Awkward!—what—how!" stammered I.

"*Diable!* without condescending to be more plain, my friend, I think that under all the circumstances, it is exceedingly awkward that the countess and you, a

former lover, are, with the knowledge of such a man as Bourgneuf, within a few miles of each other. How do you feel about it?"

"Simply, my dear chevalier," said I, as the wax lights began to multiply strangely, and the room seemed to swim round me, "that my naturally fine appetite is in no way impaired by the circumstance, and I have dined as well as ever I did on that deuced tough ration beef of the Hessians; and as for Monsieur de Bourgneuf——"

"He is at your service, monsieur!" said a harsh voice in my ear, while a hand was laid, almost with a clutch, on my right shoulder. I turned and encountered that which sobered me in a moment; the stern and sallow face, dark, glittering, and rather wicked eyes of the Count de Bourgneuf, who had entered unseen, and had overheard, *how much or how little* of the past conversation, we knew not. He delivered to me a paper, saying, "Monsieur, this is your signed pass to the nearest British cantonment; and you can depart when you please, and by any route; so delay is unadvisable," he added, with a keen glance.

"I thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said I.

"By the way of Hesse Cassel, I have advised," said Monjoy, hastily.

"The Lahn lies in an *opposite* direction—but Hesse Cassel be it," said the Count, with a deep smile. "Ah, Boisguiller, thou unconscionable tosspot—art bibbing still? Good evening, monsieur," he added to me, as he bowed and withdrew; "a pleasant and a *safe* journey to you."

"Did you remark his smile?" asked Monjoy, in a low voice, while twitching my sleeve.

"Yes," replied I; "and it reminded me of one

who never smiled thus save when planning mischief."

I thought of the aide-de-camp, Shirley.

"Boisguiller, assist me in getting a horse for our comrade," said Monjoy, looking at his watch; "it is now eight, and we shall depart from this within an hour."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE STORY OF MONJOY.

It was long past midnight, however, before we were prepared to leave Ysembourg. To set out with the conviction that every tree, hedge, or thicket might conceal at least one musket, the contents of which were intended for my person, was more exciting than pleasing. The horse provided for me was one of our grey troopers. It had been wounded by a pistol-ball at Minden, and halted on the off hind leg, thus our progress was slower than we could have wished. As my purse had been taken by my captors, Boisguiller gave me a couple of louis d'ors, which sum I was to give in turn to the first French officer whom we took prisoner.

"*Bon voyage !*" cried he, with a loud voice, as we mounted at the arched gateway of the old castle; "which way do you ride?"

"Towards Hesse Cassel," replied Monjoy, in the same tone, intended specially for the ears of those who loitered about; and among them was Armand de Pricorbin, who at once withdrew, and entered the castle, no doubt to report our departure to Bourgneuf.

"Hesse Cassel," continued Boisguiller; "ah, I was

quartered there for three months before Minden, and added considerably to the debts and general discomfort of the citizens. Adieu, messieurs!"

"Adieu, M. le Chevalier!" and we rode off.

Though considerably hardened by campaigning and warfare—for had I not seen Lindsay, Charters, Keith, and many others who were dear friends and comrades perish?—I shuddered on passing where the corpse of Silvain de Pricorbin still swung as a warning to pillagers, from the arm of a tree above the pathway; there it swayed mournfully to and fro in the night wind, and I felt some remorse with the conviction, that by an almost heedless complaint, I had procured the death of this man—and for what? Abstracting a ring—a bauble—the gift of a girl who had discarded me for a man who was now perhaps tracking me to destruction. The stars shone brightly in a calm sky as we rode down the hill from Ysembourg, and saw a few lights twinkling dimly in the little town of that name. By the foraging and skirmishing of the light cavalry, the whole country between the Maine and Lahn had been reduced to a desert; and from Ysembourg to the Weser it was pretty much the same, for whatever the French did not require they burned or destroyed. On our route I committed myself entirely to the guidance of the intelligent Monjoy—a pleasing young man, whose bearing impressed me with the decided conviction that *something* had happened in his life, which, to him, cast a shadow over the present and the future.

"From what passed between you and the Chevalier de Boisguiller," said he, "am I right in supposing that a deadly rivalry existed between you and Bourgneuf prior to his marriage?"

"No, Monjoy; I repeat to you that I never saw the Count until the day subsequent to Minden, and I did not know him even then, or until yesterday, when we stood together in the presence of Maréchal Broglie."

"*Parbleu!* 'tis most singular!"

"What?"

"How all this hostility on his part came to pass."

"I shall tell you, and the narrative may serve to shorten our journey."

I then related to him the whole story of my adventures in Brittany; my love for Jacqueline, and how strangely we were thrown together in that sequestered château; her abduction, and her supposed death. He seemed much struck by the recital, and when I concluded he sighed and said—

"I, too, have not been fortunate in the field of Cupid, and could tell you a story, not so stirring as yours certainly, but nevertheless full of most mournful interest to me."

"Ah! I now remember the miniature of that beautiful girl concerning whom Boisguiller rallied and warned you."

"Boisguiller is thoughtless," replied the young Frenchman, "but good-hearted and brave; yet he is not the kind of man to understand the depth of a passion such as mine—a passion all the deeper because its object is lost for ever!"

"Dead?"

"Worse, monsieur, she is married to another, and this little locket is all I possess to remind me of many happy days that can never come again. I shall be equally confiding with you, monsieur, and will relate how I came to suffer so deeply." After a little pause, he began thus:—

“My aunt is Prioress of the Convent of Les Dames de Notre Dame de Charité, in the Rue St. Jacques, at Paris, where they occupy the ancient house of the Nuns of the Visitation. Her devotees observe the general vows of the four monastic orders, and occupy themselves with the education of young ladies of good family, who are boarded in the convent to acquire accomplishments. When a mere youth attending school, I used frequently to visit my aunt, and spent all my holidays at her convent in the Rue St. Jacques, and thus among the boarders I first saw Isabelle du Platel. She was just past girlhood; her family were old Normans, and hence that exquisite fairness of complexion and golden-tinted hair which you remarked in her miniature. We were always playmates and companions in the convent garden; but after a time this was interdicted by my aunt, who, foreseeing what might happen, wisely exiled me from the convent, and would only consent to receive me in the parlour, and then on stated days and certain occasions. I was in despair at this change in my affairs; but a friend and brother student, Boisguiller, then a sub-lieutenant in the French Guards, enabled me to circumvent to some degree the precautions of my worthy relative, as he possessed an old and unoccupied house in the Rue St. Jacques, the windows of which overlooked the convent garden; and thereat I spent the hours that were not devoted to the study of fortification, regular, irregular, and defensive, of Coehorn, de Ville, and Vauban, in watching for Isabelle, and exchanging the most passionate little billets by the simple process of lowering them by a string from the windows, which, fortunately perhaps, were too high up and too strongly grated to permit nearer meetings. For three years our love

affair was conducted thus, and we were happy in the secrecy of our passion, which was all the deeper that (Boisguiller excepted) others knew it not, and could neither by jest or taunt bring the ready blush to our young cheeks; and so time passed, till Isabelle was sixteen and I was three years her senior, with an epaulette on my left shoulder. I can painfully recal the last day on which I repaired to the accustomed place, with a trinket I had brought for Isabelle, and tying it to the cord, waited impatiently, with my eyes fixed on the flowery vista of the garden walk by which she usually approached; but hour after hour passed, and there came no Isabelle to me! The next day and the next I met with no better success, and a terror filled my heart. Had we been betrayed or discovered? Isabelle was ill—dying, perhaps! I rushed to the convent gate, and sought an interview with my aunt. The old porteresse had special orders to keep me out; but my excitement was too much for the good dame's nerves, and my impetuosity swept all her scruples away. Thus, she admitted me into the parlour, and when my aunt came—a woman, tall, thin, and stately in bearing, with a severe expression on her brow—I besought her to pardon me, and to say if Mademoiselle du Platel was ill!

“‘I am most happy to inform you, my dear Ger-vais, that she is not—but she has left this——’

“‘Left the convent,’ I exclaimed; ‘and for where?’

“‘Her father's house.’

“‘In the Rue de Tournon?’

“‘Near the palace of the Luxembourg—yes.’

“‘And she will return?’ I continued, impetuously.

“‘No more,’ said my aunt, with a sad smile.

“‘No more?’ I repeated, with perplexity.

“ ‘At least, not as Mademoiselle du Platel.’

“ ‘In Heaven’s name, madame—my dear aunt, I conjure you to tell me what you mean? See how I am trembling!’

“ ‘Compose yourself, my dear boy; when next we see her she will be Madame d’Eseombas.’

“ ‘Oh, impossible—absurd!’ I exclaimed; ‘do you mean old M. d’Eseombas, who also resides in the Rue de Tournon, whose copper-coloured nose is the laughing-stock of all Paris, and whom I have caricatured, with his wig, large buckles, and round shoulders, a dozen of times?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘But that hideous old man has no son to marry Isabelle?’

“ ‘He is to marry her himself.’

“ ‘Monstrous, madame!’ I exclaimed, furiously; ‘how can this be?’

“ ‘Because the father of Isabelle is poor, and M. d’Escombas is rich enough to buy the Luxembourg and all that is in it. Such is the world, my poor Gervais, and such are its ways and vanities!’

“ ‘Seeing that my eyes were full of tears, she continued—

“ ‘Gervais, listen to me, my dear boy. M. du Platel, though he has been unable to accumulate riches, for the acquisition of which his desire is a passion very strong, if not stronger than that of love itself—has enough, but barely so, to maintain a numerous family. God has given him a daughter lovely in the extreme. M. d’Eseombas is fired by her beauty: he is old, certainly; he has a nose covered with rappee, cheeks that are rouged, and false teeth; but then he is *so* rich! Ah, *mon Dieu*, my dear boy, how you grind your teeth!’

“ ‘I had heard enough, and retired choking with in-

dignation, love, jealousy, and pity ; and with all the thoughts, fierce, bitter, and stinging, that could madden a young and loving heart, I found myself going I knew not, cared not whither, jostling and staggering like a blind man among the passers in the sunlit Rue St. Jacques. I was full of vague plots and wild plans—full of schemes of bitter vengeance, none of which could take any tangible form, until I met my friend Guillaume de Boisguiller, who had just come off guard at the Louvre, and who advised me to see Isabelle at once—to run off with her. But whither ? *Diable!* I had no money—nothing but my silv epaulette. Then he suggested that I should run d'Escombas through the body. That would be simple enough ; but I knew that a duel between an old man and a mere boy was not to be thought of, even in Paris, where all kinds of absurdities are committed every hour ; and then he was a near kinsman of the Governor of the Conciergerie du Palais, and the very thought of that grim personage, and his horrid place, made my blood run cold."

(Poor gentle and amiable Monjoy ! while speaking to me how little did he foresee that some of his last hours would be spent in that degraded prison !)

"Taking a hint from the plot of a comedy we had seen at the Théâtre Français then the only one in Paris in which regular tragedies and comedies could be acted, and which had an exclusive right to represent the plays of Corneille, Racine, Molière, and Voltaire, Boisguiller borrowed the gown, hat, and trinket-box of a Jew who was patronized by the officers of his regiment, and by adopting a false beard, a pair of spectacles, and painting a few wrinkles round his eyes, made his disguise complete. He then set out

for the residence of M. du Platel in the twilight of an October evening. I was too nervous and too excited to have done this in person ; so Boisguiller, whose coolness was invincible, became my ambassador. He was not a chevalier then, not having won his cross of St. Louis. He contrived to introduce himself to Isabelle, and while she was looking over the trinkets in his box, to whisper my name in her ear, and to slip into her hand a note from me, to which he begged an answer ere he went away.

“ ‘You are a friend of Gervais,’ she whispered ; ‘and in disguise?’

“ ‘His friend and companion—Boisguiller, an officer of the French Guards.’”

“ ‘I thank you, monsieur, from my soul ! Oh, tell Gervais it is true about this marriage—all too true ! Despite my love for him, a love of which I told them in my agony, my parents sell me to that odious and pitiless old man, ‘Sell me,’ she continued, while her blue eyes sparkled with grief and anger, ‘even as a Circassian girl is sold in a Turkish bazaar ! I have been taken—torn from my convent, and am kept here till my purchaser arranges his household. Oh, vile system ! How my soul revolts at the life, the hopeless future, to which I am doomed !’

“ ‘And you will meet Gervais ?’

“ ‘But once and then all his over, and for ever !’

“ ‘When—where will you meet him ?’ urged my friend.

“ ‘In the garden of the Luxembourg, near the white marble lions, at noon to-morrow ; and, failing that, on the next day at the same hour.’

“Exulting in his diplomacy, Boisguiller hurried back to me, relinquished his disguise and resumed his

uniform, talking the while with noisy admiration of the beauty and high spirit of Mademoiselle du Platel. Spirit? *mon Dieu!* he little knew how, by all the appliances of domestic and parental tyranny it had been crushed and broken. With a soul inspired by tenderness and anxiety, I repaired at the appointed hour to the place of rendezvous—the avenue to the garden nursery, and there I leaned, so great was my emotion, against the base of one of the white marble lions, and my heart fluttered at the sight of every female figure. But the clocks of Paris struck the hour in vain; it passed away; another hour succeeded, and there came no Isabelle. Had they discovered our assignation, those venal parents? Was she ill—what had happened? It was, however, merely a visit of that provoking Monsieur d’Escombas which interfered with her arrangements, as he insisted on escorting her, wherever she was going. But next day, when I sought the same place and pressed her to my breast, we retired to a secluded part of the garden, where we could converse and freely deplore the hard destiny which was about to separate us for ever.

“*Grand Dieu!* Monsieur Gauntlet, why should I weary you with all this, and what interest can it possibly have for you?” exclaimed the Frenchman, suddenly interrupting himself; but I pressed him to continue, for the modulated tones of his voice, and his sorrowful earnestness, gave his story an interest which cannot be imparted to it here.

“I implored Isabelle to elope with me; but she trembled, closed her eyes, and whispered, in a broken voice, that she dared not.

“You are but sixteen, Isabelle, and they would consign you to a man of sixty—a sweet young girl like

you surrendered to the cold arms of one whose heart is but the dregs and lees of a life spent in Paris! Oh, it is piteous!

“‘And bitterly they taunt me——’

“‘Who taunt you?’

“‘My father and mother,’ said she, shuddering; ‘taunt me with *you*, Gervais. I ask for a husband who will love me as I would wish to be loved, and in reply they lay diamonds, jewels, fans and feathers at my feet. Away with these, I exclaimed, lest I tread upon them!’

“And then the poor young girl wept passionately—

“‘My beloved Isabelle,’ I exclaimed, ‘how shall I survive seeing you consigned to a fate so miserable—to a lord and master whose age, ideas, tastes and ways are all so unbecoming and uncongenial? Whose scorn and cruelty—oh, I know him well—will make you shrink as the frosty wind withers the early flowers of spring, and whose sordid coldness will crush your little heart! God preserve you, Isabelle, from the fate of many others who are similarly mated and lost in our worthy city of Paris!’

“‘I have to thank you for the character you give of me, friend Monjoy, but ’twill avail you little,’ said a voice behind us, and we found ourselves in the presence of M. du Platel and M. d’Escombas, who had just spoken, and also of his grim kinsman, the governor of the Conciergerie du Palais.

“Fortunately the latter personage, of whom I had an instinctive horror, was present; for we were in a solitary part of the garden. I had my sword on, and the malevolent smile on the thick lips and coarse dark visage of M. d’Escombas, with the furious scorn and

indignation of M. du Platel might have prompted me to commit some desperate extravagance.

“‘Oh, my father, my father!’ implored Isabelle; ‘let me go back to my convent. Mother St. Rosalie de Sicile assures me that I have a true vocation!’

“‘So it seems,’ sneered M. d’Escombas, ‘by your coming here to meet a young spark three days before your marriage.’

“‘Father, it is better to endure the poverty, the vows, the life-long self-abnegation of all in a convent, than an union without love to a man who is older even than thee.’

“Her voice was most touching—her expression lovely; but the old barbarians heard her unmoved.

“‘Child, you know not what you say,’ replied M. du Platel, in great wrath. ‘I provide a rich marriage, a wealthy husband, who will prove a kind one, too; a splendid house here, close by the Luxembourg; a life of freedom and gaiety; and *diable!* what more would you have? unless it is this rascal of a student, who would be better inside La Force than here, creating mischief and dispeace.’

“‘Oh, why torture me thus?’ she replied, faintly, while pressing her hands on her heart.

“‘Torture—*bon diable!* she talks of torture, with a suitor here who has ever so many thousand livres per annum,’ said M. du Platel, shrugging up his shoulders.

“‘*Mon père,*’ she demanded, with her little nostrils quivering, and her blue eyes flashing fire; ‘for how many thousand purses do the Circassians sell?’

“‘*Morbleu!* she is always speaking about Circassians,’ growled M. d’Escombas; ‘what do we know of them, save that they are pagans who eat horæflesh on

Friday, and never sign the cross or keep the month of Mary.'

"'And yet they sell their daughters, M. d'Escombas, just like the subjects of the Most Christian King.'

"'Child, this is treason and blasphemy—and close to the walls of the Luxembourg, too!'

"'Tis truth and despair.'

"'Summon a fiacre, M. d'Escombas—a thousand devils, 'tis time to end this!' exclaimed du Platel, grinding his teeth; and then they bore her away from me.

"In three days after this sorrowful meeting I heard the bells of St. Germain de Prè ringing gaily for the marriage of Isabelle to the wealthy citizen d'Escombas, who was willing to take her without a portion—a circumstance that had quite sufficient influence with one so sordid and cruel as her father, without considering on the other hand the vast wealth of her suitor.

"After this, I was long ill and tired of life, and believe that but for the unwearying friendship of Guillaume de Boisguiller I should have died—if indeed people ever die for love, which I don't think they do. It was about this time that all Paris, and all France, too, rung with the terrible story of the conspiracy, the trial, and execution of Robert Francis Damien; and M. d'Escombas, on hearing that I was ill, affected to pity me, and begged of Boisguiller that he might be permitted to pay me a visit. Then I—urged I know not by what motive or impulse—consented. On hearing this, what think you my fortunate rival did?—for all his plans we discovered after—*how* need not be related here. He unlocked the secret drawer of an iron strong-

box, and taking therefrom a ring, placed it, with a peculiar smile, upon a finger of his right hand. It was a large and antique ring, which his father had procured in Venice at a sale of the trinkets of the old Doge, Marc Antonio Mocenigo, who became the spouse of the Adriatic in 1701. This gold ornament was what was then termed a *Death Ring*, used when acts of poisoning were common in the seventeenth century. It was of the purest metal ; but attached to the outside were two lion's claws, and having in each a cleft that was filled with the most deadly poison. In crowds, or balls, or elsewhere, the wearer of such a ring could exercise his secret revenge by the slightest scratch, in pressing the hand of the doomed person, who would next day be found, perhaps, in bed dead, no one knew why or how. So, armed with this most fatal trinket, M. d'Escombas came with Boisguiller to visit *me*. I have but a vague recollection of the interview. He knew how passionately I loved Isabelle, and I saw the savage gleam that crossed his eyes when I inquired for her, but as one might inquire for a sister. He assured me in brief and hurried terms that she was well, content, and happy. Then I congratulated him with a tongue that clove to the roof of my mouth. He rose, at last, to retire ; bade me be of good heart, said his adieux, and pressing my hand, left me, with a dark smile in his eyes, which were small, black, glittering, and half obscured by their shaggy overhanging brows of grizzly hair, which, in fact, were like mustachios placed over his nose instead of below it. Scarcely was he gone before I felt an indescribable sensation pass over all my body ; my eyesight grew dim ; my brain reeled, and my thoughts became delirious. Then every faculty seemed to become paralysed, and the doctors—in his

excitement Boisguiller soon had half the medical faculty of Paris at my bedside—declared that I had been poisoned by some mineral substance. But poisoned by *whom* and *how*? Ah, *le brigand*! how little did we suspect? Strong antidotes were applied, and after a time I recovered, for the poison in the ring had been placed there so many years ago that it had not retained sufficient strength to destroy life; but I leave you, Monsieur Gauntlet, to imagine the hatred and horror I had of the traitor d'Escombas when I came to know the actual object of his visit. I recovered fully, and joined the army under the Marshals Contades and de Broglie, in Germany. So my Isabelle is still the wife of that man; but there is a sadness of heart and of eye about her, a silence and enduring gentleness under the most insulting jealousy and petty tyranny, which make all who know, pity her, and deplore the fate to which she has been consigned. Had she died I should have sorrowed for her long and deeply, and have eventually recovered from the shock; but to know that she lives, and for *another*, is enough to—but, hola! what have we here?"

CHAPTER LVII.

A SAD CONCLUSION.

THE interruption to the story was caused by Gervais Monjoy observing that before us rose the ivy-covered ruins of an ancient schloss, which seemed to inform him, as he said, that in the interest which he took in his unfortunate love affair he had lost or mistaken the way. We were on the brow of a high eminence and far away in distance spread the snowy landscape.

In the foreground were some leafless woods and ridges of rock, which like the ruins of the old castle shone in russet and pink, as the yellow and rosy dawn stole across the eastern quarter of the sky. A star or two still twinkled overhead, and one shone brightly through the gaping windows of the square keep of the old schloss.

"*Morbleu*, my friend! my mind has been so full of Isabelle that I have proved but an indifferent guide. We are on the road to Waldeck. That is the old castle of Count Heinrich, who slew Ferdinand of Brunswick at Fritzlar, in 1400. Let me consider. We are not very far from Zuschen, and a bend of the Lahn lies about two miles distant on our right. Fortunately here is a peasant. Halloa! my friend, who or what are you?" asked Monjoy, in German, as a man attired in an overcoat trimmed with black wolf's fur, and wearing a cap and boots of deerskin, with a horn-hafted knife in his girdle, a musket in his hand, and attended by a dog, appeared by the wayside, where he was leisurely lighting his pipe, and quietly surveying us while doing so.

"I am a woodman," he answered, somewhat gruffly.

"You are abroad betimes, friend."

"Those who have their bread to earn in a country swarming with soldiers, who help themselves to the best of everything, have need to be so, Mein Herr."

"Do you know the Lahn?"

"Right well. I am Karl Karsseboom, a forester of the Baron Von Freyenthal. This path to the right will bring you to it straight. Two miles from this is the ford; the water is shallow and frozen; but the King of Prussia's Black Hussars are in a village on the other side, so be wary."

"My friend, we thank you," said Monjoy, as the peasant touched his fur cap respectfully, and, with his musket shouldered, strode off, not in search of game, as we thought then, but to fulfil his duty of scout, by acquainting some followers of Bourgneuf that I was to cross the Lahn at the frozen ford.

"I have seen you some fifteen miles or so on your way," said my companion gradually reining in his horse, "and further would I go, monsieur, but for those plans of Dillenburg which I must lay before the *maréchal*, and which our friend Boisguiller must convey to head quarters. Farewell: I have enjoyed much the few hours we have had of your society; but the best we can wish each other, if this war lasts, is that we may seldom or never meet again, as we shall only do so when bayonets are fixed and bullets are flying."

Monjoy shook my hand, and wheeling round his horse, rode off. I remained for some minutes watching his retiring figure, the shadow of which was thrown across the snow by the rising sun, and in the clear frosty air the echoes of his horse's hoofs long came distinctly ringing to the ear. I felt depressed and lonely now, for the suavity of manner and gentleness of expression possessed by this young officer made him a singularly pleasing companion. How much more would I have been interested in him then, could I have foreseen his terrible future! Turning, I rode slowly along the path indicated. It was distinctly visible even amid the snow, as day had dawned and the sun was up; and while I traversed it at an easy pace (my horse being indifferently frosted in the shoes, and halting at every step), with the reader's permission I will give him—may I add, *her*?—the sad

sequel to the story of Monjoy, as I afterwards read it in the *Mercure Francaise*, and the *Gazette de Bruxelles*, in our camp at Warburg in Prussian Westphalia.

Monjoy returned to Paris with Maréchal de Contades, the Marquis de Voyer, the Comte de Luc, and other officers who declined for various reasons to serve under the Duc de Broglie, and he lived there a somewhat secluded life, exerting himself sedulously in the study of his profession. But he could not fail to hear from time to time of her he had lost, and how the neglect the querulous tyranny, even the *blows*, of M. d'Escoribas she endured with meek and silent patience—a patience that galled Monjoy; for as year succeeded year she had become the mere nurse of a petulant and selfish old man.

“Many a good woman’s life is no more cheerful,” says a certain writer; “a spring of beauty and sunshine; a bitter disappointment, followed by pangs and frantic tears, and then a long, long and monotonous story of submission.”

As yet such had been the tenor of the life of Isabelle, but never did she and Gervais meet, save once in the boxes of the Opera House of the Palais Royal—the same theatre which had been built of old by Cardinal Richelieu, and was burned down four years after Minden. They were seated very near each other. She seemed wondrously pale and beautiful; she was clad in light blue silk, her delicate neck, her white taper arms, and her golden hair all glittering with diamonds—the badges of her wedded slavery. Both were deeply agitated, but neither spoke, till Isabelle, unable to restrain her emotion, whispered to Monjoy behind her fan—

"I can read your secret in your eyes, my poor Gervais, and so will others if you do not retire."

"My secret?" he faltered.

"That you love me—love me still, though I am the slave of this Dives. Oh, my God! fly me—leave me to my misery—a misery known to myself and Heaven only!"

Almost suffocated by his emotions—the grief and tenderness the familiar sound of her voice and this pathetic appeal all served to kindle in his breast, he rose abruptly and quitted the theatre, followed by a threatening glance from d'Escombas. That evening he wandered long about the streets, but an irresistible fatality always lured him towards the Rue de Tournon, where Isabelle resided. The night came on, clear and cold; there was no moon, but the stars shone brightly, and he saw all the windows of the street glittering in their pale light, and those also in that noble façade of the palace of the Luxembourg which faces the Rue de Tournon, with its pavilions at each end, and the great cupola which rises above the entrance door. While wandering here, a person jostled him with great rudeness, and turning with a hand on his sword, he encountered the remarkably forbidding and somewhat grizzled visage of—M. d'Escombas!

"Monsieur will apologize?" said Monjoy, in a husky voice, after recovering from his surprise.

"Monsieur will do nothing of the kind," growled the old man. "What the devil brings you here, Gervais Monjoy? But it matters nothing to me—so you had better walk off, and take your hand from your sword, or *parbleu!* remember that I have the same cane for you that has made Madame d'Escombas wince more than once!"

Maddened by the insult, the man, his words and the inferences to be drawn from them, Monjoy prayed aloud—

“Great source of strength, assist me! Beware! old man,” he added, “lest you drive me to despair. Remember that it is neither the sixth nor the seventh commandment in the Decalogue that may prevent me from punishing you as you deserve, and rescuing a poor victim from your tyranny.”

M. d’Escombas, who was insanely jealous, grew white and livid with rage at these words; and, as he did not want for courage, laid his hand on his walking sword, for people still wore such weapons at night in the streets of Paris.

“Dare you say this to me?” he exclaimed.

“*Oui, monsieur le scélérat*, and more if I choose. A selfish father sells his timid daughter to a sordid wretch who buys her for rank. Was it not so, old man?”

“Granted—though she preferred a beggarly student who should have stuck to his Vauban and his Coehorn,” said the other, grinding his teeth; “and what then?”

“Coldness and placid endurance of life—perhaps contentment, might have followed; but never happiness.”

“But for what, you would say?”

“Your querulous tyranny—your unmanly cruelty, with the story of which all Paris rings. You have even dared to strike her—to strike her with your clenched hand, and even with your cane. Oh, malediction, my gentle Isabelle! and here, old man, I tell you *you are a coward!*”

“A coward—and *your* Isabelle! ha—we shall see

what we shall see," exclaimed d'Escombas, boiling with ungovernable fury, as he swiftly drew his sword, and rushing upon Monjoy before the latter was aware, wounded him severely in the side.

This was too much for human endurance. The engineer drew his sword, and locking in, tossed up, or wrenched away the weapon of M. d'Escombas, which glittered in the starlight as the blade went twenty feet into the air. At the same moment the sword of Monjoy pierced the lungs of his adversary, who as he whirled round in his agony before falling, received it a second time in his back. He fell on his face and expired without a groan, and Monjoy fled, full of horror, leaving his weapon in the street, behind him. All that dreadful night he wandered about the streets of Paris, haunted by what seemed a dream, a nightmare, to endure for ever; and when day dawned he repaired straight to a Commissary (an official similar to our justice of the peace) and declared upon oath "that he had slain M. d'Escombas in the Rue de Tournon; but in a fair duel, sword in hand, in self-defence." The Commissary deplored the circumstance, but accepted the declaration, and perceiving that he was dreadfully agitated, gave him some wine and water.

"And now, dear Isabelle," he muttered wildly, "you are free—but by my hand—alas, by *my* hand!"

"How, monsieur," exclaimed the Commissary, looking up and surveying the miserable Monjoy through his spectacles—"what's this you say?"

Monjoy remained silent, but grew if possible paler.

"Hah! *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the Commissary, changing colour; "I remember now. Is it true that you were a discarded lover of Madame, when she was Mademoiselle du Platel, and a boarder with les

dames de Notre Dame de Charité ou du refuge de St. Michel, in the Rue de St. Jacques?"

"Yes," moaned Monjoy; "it is too true."

"Detain M. Gervais Monjoy in custody; send for a surgeon; bring the body of M. d'Escombas here, and let us have it examined," said the other to his officials.

In less than an hour all this was done.

"How is this?" exclaimed the surgeon, the Commissary, and all present; "there is a sword wound *in the back*, and the sword is still remaining there!"

"He has been murdered!" said the Commissary, sternly.

"Dare you say so? exclaimed Monjoy, with equal fury and indignation.

"In my official capacity, I may say anything," replied the Commissary, with a grimace—"to La Force with the prisoner!"

Within another hour Monjoy found himself in that formidable prison accused of murder. Maréchal de Contades was in disfavour at court; Maréchal de Broglie was still in Germany, where the Seven Years' War was raging as fiercely as ever; his aunt the Prioress was dead. Thus Monjoy had no friend in Paris, save *one*, for whom he dare not send; so he remained in his vault, sunk in misery, and careless for the future.

In this prison are detained until the day of trial those who are accused of crimes. It is a spacious edifice, divided into several departments, and having eight courts, all watched and guarded well. At last, in the extremity of his misery, he sent for Isabelle, that he might, to her at least, absolve himself from the crime of which he was accused. She came

clad in deep mourning, and the meeting between them was painful and affecting. But as it was known that they had been lovers in their youth, Paris was ready to believe the worst; and as the sordid M. du Platel and d'Escombas' kinsman, the Governor of the Conciergerie, cried "fire and sword" against them both, rumour succeeded in having Madame accused of being "art and part" in her husband's death. So she was arrested, and committed to a separate vault in La Force, one of the places named *les Secrets* in that formidable edifice, which is formed entirely of hewn stone and enormous bars of iron, and in the construction of which neither wood nor plaster are employed. There they languished for many months without a trial, as it happened that just about this time the chief court of justice in France, the *Parlement de Paris*—without the full concurrence of which no criminal can be arraigned—was removed, first to Pontoise and thereafter to Soissons, on account of their severe proceedings against the Archbishop of Paris, who (to repress the disorderly lives of the people) had issued a pastoral letter "forbidding all priests and curés to administer the sacrament to any one, no matter of what rank, unless they could produce a certificate from their father confessor"—a pastoral which gave great offence to the court of the Most Christian king. To be brief: when the Court ultimately assembled, poor Monjoy was brought to trial, and on being put to torture admitted that he was guilty of the murder in the Rue de Tournon, and consequently was sentenced to be broken alive upon the wheel. When asked who were his accomplices, he persisted in affirming that he had none; that Madame d'Escombas was guiltless and pure as when she left her

convent. French medical skill was brought to bear upon his quivering limbs, and then, maddened by agony, he continued deliriously to acknowledge himself guilty of the murder again and again; but on being questioned for the last time concerning Madame d'Escombas, he accused her, too! On this the windlass of the rack was instantly relaxed, and he fainted, with blood pouring from his mouth and nostrils. When his keener agony was over, on his knees, before my old friend Père Celestine (once curé of St. Solidore, and now coadjutor Bishop of Paris), with tears of blood and agony the unhappy Monjoy retracted all that had been wrung from him under torture; but it was too late. On *his* accusation and confession she too was tried, and sentenced to death, and then both were committed to the Conciergerie du Palais, and to the care of that grim governor, the kinsman of d'Escombas—he of whom Monjoy had such an instinctive dread of old. The entrance to this frightful old prison is by a low and narrow door, over which might well be carved the well-known line from Dante's "Inferno." Isabelle was conducted to the *greffe* or female prison, by that sombre vestibule which is lighted by lamps even at midday; but Monjoy was thrust, bleeding and mangled, perspiring in every limb with recent torture, into one of the dark dungeons of the Conciergerie from whence, after a time, they were both conveyed in a tumbril, and clad in sackcloth, to the Place de Grève, where she was hanged by the neck, and he, after making a pathetic declaration of her innocence, underwent the dreadful death of being broken alive upon the wheel! With his last breath he implored the executioner to see that a blue ribbon, some gift of happier years, which he wore round his neck, should

be buried with him. Such was the miserable fate of this young Frenchman who befriended me so much at Ysembourg, and whom I last saw galloping along the road from the old ruined schloss, with his epaulettes and gay uniform glittering in the morning sunshine. And now, with a pardon for this digression, I return to my own more matter-of-fact story.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE FROZEN FORD.

By a narrow path between leafless woods, I proceeded for two miles in the direction indicated by Monjoy, and then saw before me the Lahn, a stream which rises in the west of Germany, and passes by the hill which is crowned by the castle of Marburg, the old Bailiwick of Giessen, and the city of Nassau (in which and in other places along its banks we had garrisons or outposts), until it flows into the famous Rhine near Upper Lahnstein. That portion of the stream which I now approached, though broad, was shallow and frozen hard. Its banks were thickly fringed by willow trees, amid which the morning mist was rolling lazily. Here and there some of those great masses of detached copper-coloured rock which stud the scenery of Waldeck overhung the stream, and had their bases crusted with frozen foam. The region being high and hilly, and the season midwinter, the atmosphere was intensely cold, yet I was dubious of the strength of the ice, and feared that my horse, with its wounded off hind leg, might flounder and fall if its hoofs pierced the covering of the stream. As this idea occurred to me I was about to dismount, and hold the animal by

the bridle, when the appearance of a well-bearded human visage regarding me steadily from a cleft in the rocks, made me pause with a hand on my holster-flap, a motion which made the person instantly vanish. The mist enveloping the willow-covered bank I had to traverse before reaching the stream was dense, and it seemed to me that certain objects which at first resembled stumps of trees suddenly took the form of men, clad in white coats, the uniform of the French line; and, as the event proved, here were six men of the Regiment de Bretagne, a foraging party suborned by Bourgneuf to cut me off, and with them was the identical peasant whom Monjoy and I had met near the ruins of the old schloss—Karl Karsseboom. I had the marshal's signed passport, but feared to ride forward or deliver it, and for a time remained unchallenged and irresolutely watching those men whose white-clad figures amid the frosty mist and tossing willows seemed indistinct and wavering, like Banquo's shadowy line of kings, or the weird sisters in "Macbeth." I waved aloft the paper given me by Bourgneuf, the immediate reply to which was the levelling of four muskets; but three flashed in the pan, the prining having probably become wet over-night. The bullet from the fourth, however, knocked my grenadier cap awry. I then shook a white handkerchief, and demanded a parley; but a fifth and sixth musket flashed redly out of the white mist, making a hundred reverberations amid the river's bed, and another bullet grazed my left ear like a hot searing-iron. I was full of fury now, and while these would-be assassins were casting about and reloading, I heard a voice shout clearly in French, and with a mocking laugh—

"*Peste ! Arnaud de Pricorbin—il ne sait pas dis-*

tinguer une femme n'une girouette !" (He knows not a woman from a weathercock—meaning that he was a bad shot, and could hit neither.)

The brother of the executed Volontaire de Clermont was here, and had preceded me to the ford ; thus I was in peculiarly bad hands it would appear. Their six muskets were unserviceable as yet, so, spurring furiously, I rushed sword in hand at the whole group, firing a pistol and hurling it after the shot as I advanced. Gored by the spurs, the poor old horse forgot his wound, and swept through my adversaries, crashing among the frozen willows, reeds, and rotten ice. For a moment I saw six fierce, dark-visaged fellows, with white coats, red epaulettes, and blackcross belts, with their muskets clubbed to beat me down. By a back-handed stroke I slashed one across the face ; but at the same moment a bayonet pierced my horse in the bowels, and he received a long wound that ripped open his near hind flank ; this was from the musket of the German forester, who levelled it deliberately over a fragment of rock. Maddened by pain and fury, the animal reared wildly back upon its haunches, and then, instead of riding towards the ford, swerved round, and treading some of our assailants under his hoof, galloped straight along a road which led towards Wildungen, in a direction nearly opposite to that I wished to pursue. Wild, terrified, and dying, with the bit clenched tightly between his teeth, the horse was for a time quite unmanageable, and I had not power to stop him, even if inclined to do so, which I certainly was not, until beyond musket range of the discomfited rascals who guarded the frozen ford. In short, I was borne away by my wounded horse in a manner nearly similar to that which had occurred after one of our

skirmishes with the French Hussars in Brittany. I know not why it was, but I felt more excited by this encounter than by the whole day at Minden, and when riding on, seemed still to hear the report of the muskets, and to see them flashing out of the mist before me. Dropping blood and foam upon the snow with every bound, the poor animal, covered with perspiration, carried me a few miles almost at racing speed. This, however, slackened suddenly, and on coming to a thicket where a spring (the water of which had a warm or peculiar mineral property) flowed freely, I rode for nearly a mile up its bed or course, so that if followed by Arnaud de Pricorbin and other faithful Bretons of the Compté de Bourgneuf, the track of blood so visible in the snow would be lost in the running stream. Perceiving a sequestered cottage upon the slope of a hill, I approached it, and was made welcome by the occupants, who appeared to be only a poor woman and her blind daughter; but they had no fear of me, as my uniform showed them—the former at least—that I was one of those who had come to assist in freeing Westphalia and Waldeck from those unscrupulous invaders, the French. With some difficulty I made them understand, by a broken jargon, that we had been engaged in a skirmish, and that my horse had been wounded. It was placed in an outhouse or shed, where a cow was munching some chopped straw and frozen turnips. I removed the heavy demi-pique saddle, bridle, and holsters, putting the remaining pistol in my belt. While doing so the poor animal, with its bowels protruding through the bayonet wound, whinnied and rubbed its nose upon the sleeve of my red coat, as if recognising the *colour*; and in that lonely place I felt as if I had lost my only friend, when the

old grey trooper died about two hours after. I remember partaking with the poor cottager and her blind daughter of a savoury dish of stewed hare, which had been netted by herself in the adjacent fir thicket. We had also a warm jug of mulled Wildungen beer, making a repast for which I was both grateful and well appetized, after the adventures of so cold a morning. I ate and drank to strengthen me for whatever might follow, as I was still in the land of toil and danger; and for the same end I carefully recharged, primed, and flinted anew my solitary pistol, and then slept for an hour or so by the peasant's fire of turf, wood, and fir-cones. By the devious course of the river it would appear that I was still only a few miles from the Lahn; but I knew that if Arnaud de Pricorbin escaped my scuffle with him and his comrades, it would be duly reported to the Count that I was yet on the French side of the stream; thus more ample means would be taken by him to guard it, and to cut me off at any possible point elsewhere. In the distance I could see the quaint old city of Wildungen, seated between two snow-clad mountains, with the dun smoke of its winter fires ascending into the clear cold sky. At one time I thought of venturing there and endeavouring to procure a guide or escort from any French officer who was in command; and either one or other the Duke's passport would certainly have procured me; but *whom* might I meet on the way? was the next idea. The jealousy of Bourgneuf was so insane, and his whole proceedings were so cruel and unwarrantable, that my heart boiled with rage against him; and in this new cause for anger I forgot even Shirley, whose jealousy in another matter had cast me into these toils by an effort of cunning and poltroonery

which I hoped one day to requite, and amply, too. Resolving to wait until nightfall, I passed the day at the cottage of the peasant woman, who urged me to await the return of her husband, who had been absent all day with his gun in search of a deer, and could guide me with certainty.

"What is he?" I inquired carelessly.

"A forester of the Baron Von Freyenthal."

"Indeed!" said I, becoming suddenly interested. "I met such a person this morning. Does he wear a fur cap and deerskin boots, and has he a large black shaggy wolf dog?"

"Exactly, Mein Herr—you have met my husband Karl Karsseboom and his dog Jager."

"If I meet him again!" thought I, with a hand on my pistol.

After this information, and the discovery of who was my landlord, I resolved to lose no time in endeavouring to reach the ford of the Lahn at any risk. Whoever was there, the night would favour me, and I was alike forewarned and forearmed. I studied closely the features of the country from the cottage window, and repeatedly consulted a little pocket map of the principality of Waldeck, which had been given to me by Gervais Monjoy, two means of topographical knowledge that availed me little, when, a few hours after, without encountering the amiable Karl Karsseboom, I found myself on the rugged German highway alone, bewildered, and floundering along in the dark in my military jack-boots, with a heavy storm of snow drifting in my face, and the stormy and frosty north wind, which was so keen and cold that at times it well-nigh choked me.

CHAPTER LIX.

LAST OF THE EMERALD RING.

THE snow-flakes were thick and blinding ; the road-way became less and less discernible as the white mantle of winter deepened ; buried under it shrubs, tall weeds, and everything that could mark the borders of the path, a very rough and occasionally steep one, disappeared, and I wandered on wearily and at random without knowing in what direction. There was no one abroad at such an hour and in such a season, and no house was visible, for the district was wild and desolate, having been severely devastated by the French foragers. No sound came to the ear but the occasional hiss of the sharp hail that mingled with the falling snow, rendering the winter blast more chilly, choking, and biting, till the lungs became acutely pained, and the heart throbbed wildly. How far I struggled on inspiring that icy atmosphere I cannot say, but nature was beginning to sink, and in my heart grew the fear of being conquered altogether, and of perishing in the storm, when happily a light that shone down what appeared to be a kind of ravine or trench (I know not which with certainty) filled me with new strength, and manfully I made towards it, keeping in the track or line it cast so brightly towards me. Ere long I could discover other lights that shone high above me in the air ; then all at once the outline of a great old schloss or castle loomed through the snowy atmosphere, and the light which had been my guide shone apparently from a window in the lower story of the edifice. This suggested ideas of robbers, for who has not heard or read of German robbers and their

haunts in ruined castles of the Black Forest, or by the Rhine and Weser? A French outpost perhaps! Well, it mattered not; anything—even a few of the *Volontaires de Clermont* were better hosts than the snow and Jack Frost in such a night and in such a season. Suddenly a cry escaped me, when, half-stifled in snow, I sank to the armpits—yea, to the very neck, struggling and floundering like a drowning man. In fact, I had tumbled into the dry ditch of the schloss, which was nearly filled with drifted snow, and across which I scrambled with great difficulty towards the light. Thrice I nearly surrendered altogether, before, panting, breathless, and chilled to the heart's core, I reached a kind of terrace, approached the window, and peeped in. Between tapestry hangings and white curtains of Mechlin lace, there could be seen a cosy little room, lined with dark brown wainscot, the varnished panels of which shone in the light of a cheerful fire. Drapery also of Mechlin lace overhung an elegant bed, a handsome mirror, and toilet-table, on which were placed four tall candles in solid stands of mahogany and silver. There were one or two ebony Dutch cabinets, quaint, Chinese figures, an ormolu clock, and various pretty *bijouterie*, and there reigned within a sense of warmth, perfume, and comfort, that reached even to my chilly post without the casement. But now, through the large pattern of the Mechlin lace hangings, I could discern two female figures near the fire-place; they were each kneeling at a carved oak *prie-dieu*, saying their prayers and warming themselves at the same time, thus combining their comfort with their piety. By her dress, and the contour of her head and shoulders, one appeared to be a lady; the other an attendant. Benumbed to agony, I felt dreamy, bewil-

dered, and knew not what to do ; sleep seemed to be stealing over my senses. What if all I saw was an illusion, and these two fair ones were but Lurries, like those who haunted the Luriberg ? What if the whole affair proved a dream, from which I should waken, if I ever woke at all, to find myself amid the snow-clad ruins of some old haunted schloss beside the Lahn ?—for such is the plot of many a German story. But when they rose from prayer I was quickly undeceived, and a cry almost escaped me on recognising Jacqueline de Broglie and her pretty attendant, the waggish Angelique ? Some minutes elapsed before I could sufficiently master my emotions to enable me to observe them particularly. Both seemed almost as unchanged as when we were together in the old chateau, especially Madame Tricot, the pretty, piquante, and black-eyed Bretonne. (Ah, she had soon tired of her M. Jacquot, who perhaps had given himself too many airs on becoming coachman to the coadjutor Bishop of Paris.) And she was here now with her former mistress (and mine, too) in Germany, the land of the Seven Years' War. The soft and charming features, the dark hair and eyes of Jacqueline, were all as I had seen them—not last, when lying, as it would seem, lifeless in the forest, but as they had been in our happier times. She was beautiful as ever ; but the slightest symptom of dark down, like a shade, was visible at each corner of her pretty mouth—a symptom not uncommon among Frenchwomen after their twentieth year. What was I to do now ? To advance was to run into the jaws of danger ; to retire was to perish amid the drifting snow, and already the very marrow seemed frozen in my bones. As she said something to Angelique, a thrill passed through me at the sound of her voice ;

something of my old love swelled up in my heart, and then pique repressed it; she seemed so happy and so smiling! Had she been compelled to marry Bourgneuf? But, save her love, what was there to tie her unto me, after I had disappeared from the chateau?

Suddenly the window against which I pressed (till my nose, had it been observed, must have presented a very livid aspect), and which had not been bolted, parted in two leaves that opened inwards, and heavily and awkwardly, with a shower of snow, I fell headlong into the apartment, and almost at the feet of Jacqueline, who, with her attendant, uttered a cry of terror; but both speedily recovered their presence of mind.

"*Mon Dieu!* what is this?—a drunken soldier!" exclaimed the first, with great asperity.

"A *mosquetaire rouge*—*Grand Dieu!* 'tis an Englishman! We shall all be murdered. Help! help!" cried Madame Tricot, with new dismay.

"Jacqueline—Jacqueline! for Heaven's sake, hush! Have you quite forgotten me, Basil Gauntlet, and our pleasant days in old Bretagne?" I exclaimed, in an excited and imploring tone.

Terror, surprise, and anything but real pleasure filled the eyes of Jacqueline as she recognised me. She trembled, and held up her hands as if to shield her averted face and keep me back; but this was needless, as I never approached, but stood near the open window through which came the drifting snow and the night wind that waved the hangings.

"Oh, Jacqueline!" said I, while an irrepressible emotion of tenderness filled my heart, "how terrible was the time when last I saw you stretched upon the

earth in the forest of St. Aubin de Cormier!—and why do you greet me so coldly now?”

“Monsieur,” said Angelique, taking my hands kindly in hers, “she greets you as people of the world greet those whom they are anxious to forget.”

“With a fearful and cold welcome, Angelique.”

“True, *mon ami*, it is so.”

“Then I pray you to pardon this intrusion,” said I, hurriedly; “in seeking the British lines I have lost my way, and my life is beset by other dangers than the winter storm. Tell me where the Lahn lies, and I shall go; but pity me, Jacqueline, for Heaven and my own heart alone know how well I loved you.”

There was a gratified smile on her lovely lip; a smile—and at such a time—it went a long way to cure me of my folly.

“O, *mon pauvre Basil*! and so it is really you?” said she, regarding me with a certain vague interest, “but here, at this time of night,” she continued with alarm, “and the count—I expect him every moment! You know that I am married, do you not? Get him away—away from here. Oh, Angelique, where are your brains? Aid us, or he is lost, and I, too, perhaps!”

“Lost, indeed?” I repeated, bitterly.

“Guillaume de Boisguiller, whom you found in that horrid English prison-ship, told you all about my marriage, did he not?” said Jacqueline, earnestly.

“Yes, madame.”

“And you did not die of a broken heart?”

“Not at all, madame; I can assure you that broken hearts are articles quite as rare among us in England as with you in France.”

“Ah, indeed!” said she, smiling again.

"'Tis so," said I, with a laugh, which sounded strangely in my own ears, and in which she joined, giving her shoulders the while a little French shrug.

And this was the Jacqueline about whom I had sighed, raved, and wept! So here was an extinction of love, and a great demolition of romance at one fell blow.

"Tell me where the Lahn lies, madame, and I shall not trouble you with my presence for a moment longer. I am in constant danger of my life, for your husband seeks to destroy me, and without a reason."

"*Grands Dieux!*" she exclaimed, with real alarm, "are you the fugitive to secure whom Bourgneuf has dispatched men in so many directions?"

"Yes, madame; so permit me to restore to you this emerald ring. It nearly cost me my life, and yet it won me my liberty yesterday at Ysembourg."

"From whom?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Your gallant old father, the Duc de Broglie." Then drawing her ring from my finger, I laid it on the toilet table with the air of Cromwell ordering the removal of "that bauble," the mace.

"He has no less than three parties out to cut you off—one in the direction of Hesse Cassel—one on the road to Wildungen—and a third at the ford near Zuschen, under Arnaud de Pricorbin."

"The bridges——"

"Alas! are all destroyed, and though a plank might aid you in crossing the one at Freyenthal, I heard him say that the Baron Konrad watches all the riverside with his foresters to prevent your passage. *Mon Dieu!* what shall be done?"

"Let me forth into the night again," said I, turn-

ing ; " anywhere is better than here. Adieu, madame, adieu, and for ever !"

" *Hola ! mon bon Monsieur Gauntlet ;* so we meet again, do we ?" exclaimed a familiar voice ; and a cry escaped the women, when I found myself confronted by the Count de Bourgneuf, who shrugged his shoulders in the true French style, till his epaulettes touched his ears, while a fierce, ironical, and almost diabolical smile spread over his visage, and he ground his teeth. "*Aha, mon garçon !*" he continued, making me a series of mock bows, and then I perceived that he had a cocked pistol dangling in each hand : " so I've caught you at last, eh ?"

CHAPTER LX.

THE WHISPERED ORDER.

IN his rage, Bourgneuf, with each ironical bow, shook from his brigadier wig the white powder which he wore in great profusion. The danger was imminent ; peril menaced me in front and rear ; the winter storm without, and an absurdly jealous foe within. I drew the pistol from my belt ; but, alas ! the pan was open, and the snow when I fell into the ditch of the schloss, had replaced the priming. It was useless ; however, as Bourgneuf was levelling his first weapon at my head, I rushed upon him, struck up the muzzle with my left hand, so that in exploding the ball pierced the ceiling. With my pistol-butt I struck the weapon from his other hand, and seized him by the throat ; but the room was almost immediately filled by soldiers of the Regiment de Bretagne, who beat me down and disarmed me. The count drew my sword from its scabbard, and contemptuously snapped the blade under his foot, saying,

"*Ha ! pst-sacré coquin-pst !*" as I was dragged into another apartment, and the door of the countess's room was closed and locked upon her and her attendant, whose cries I could hear ringing through the mansion ; and as they seemed the prelude to some deed of cruelty and violence, I felt that in hands so unscrupulous I was helpless and completely lost. However, I did not give in without a desperate struggle. From Tom Kirkton, who in his wilder days had practised at Marylebone and Hockly-in-the-Hole, I had picked up a little of the good old English science of self-defence, so I struck out right and left, and knocked over the crapauds like ninepins, till the butt-end of a musket laid me on the field of battle, and for a time I thought all was over. I was now rifled. The two louis of kind Boisguiller were speedily appropriated. The pass of the Duc de Broglie and the little lace handkerchief of Aurora, which I still preserved as a souvenir of my only relative, were handed to the count. He laughed at the first, but the sight of the second transported him with a fury only equal to that of the Moor on the loss of that important handkerchief which the Egyptian to his mother gave, and which had "magic in the web of it."

"Count Bourgneuf," I exclaimed, resolutely, on recovering my breath, "you have in your hand the signed passport of the Duc de Broglie : how dare you thus to violate it ?"

"Dare—*parbleu !* from whom did you receive it ?"

"From yourself, in presence of M. Monjoy and the Chevalier de Boisguiller."

"Signed, you say ?"

"Yes—look at it."

"I *have* looked ; but it bears a signature Monseig

neur de Breglie would scarcely recognise, and which no French soldier is bound to respect."

"A forgery! Mean you to say that it is a forgery of yours?" I exclaimed, furiously.

"Term it as you please," said he, tearing the paper to pieces; "'tis thus that I respect it."

"The duke released me," I began, with some emotion of alarm—"released me on parole, and complimented me——"

"Because you saved the life of his daughter from an outlaw—or pretend that you did so."

"But you, her husband, M. le Comte——"

"Mean to put you to death as a spy, who remained as such in Bretagne for several weeks, and who now as a prisoner seeks to escape, after lurking behind the French lines, of which the river Lahn is the present boundary."

"Say, rather," said I, with unwise bitterness, "that with a jealous cowardice which has no parallel, you resolved to destroy me as one who loved the countess before she had the misfortune to become your wife."

Enraged that this remark was made before the listening soldiers who crowded all the room, Bourgneuf said, with an oath and a scornful laugh, "Ha!—think you so?"

"I both think and say so."

"What an intolerable world it would be if every one said all he thought, as you do; but I will meet you with the sword if you choose."

"I will not fight with a would-be assassin."

"The pistol, then," he continued, grinding his teeth.

"I will not fight with an assassin, even though he wear the uniform of a colonel of the French Line," I replied,

resolutely, though the soldiers began to mutter angrily, and beat the floor with the butts of their muskets.

"*Bah—pst ! ce pistolet est un arrêt !*" said Bourgneuf, turning on his heel with a sneer, and this pet phrase of the French soldiers (implying the "white feather") so enraged me that I could with pleasure have pistolled him on the spot.

Looking round for a man in whom he could trust, he selected a corporal, a most sinister-looking fellow, whose nose was quite awry, and whose shaggy eyebrows met over it in one. To him he gave a *whispered order*, and though my ear was painfully acute at such a time, I could only detect the words "distance—sound of firing might not disturb—buried in the snow."

The man with the crooked nose and huge chevrons saluted his colonel, and desired me to follow him, which I did immediately, conceiving that my chances were always better with one man than with a score. As we left the room a gleam of triumphant malice sparkled in the eyes of Bourgneuf, and he gave me an ironical bow. When *next* I saw his face its expression was very different. In the vestibule of the schloss, which was full of sleeping soldiers, the corporal summoned a personage, in whom I recognised Karl Kaarseboom, in whose ear he repeated the order of the count, and muttering curses at the trouble I caused them, these two worthies, after carefully loading their muskets, desired me gruffly to follow them, and leaving the schloss by a drawbridge which spanned the snow-filled ditch, we set forth, on what errand I knew not. The storm of wind and snow was over now. Morning was at hand ; the stars shone clear and brilliantly, and

so bright was the reflection of the snow that every object could be discerned as distinctly as at noon-day. The silence was profound ; even our footfalls were muffled in the white waste, from amid which the fir-trees stood up like sheeted spectres. I was weary and chilled, being without any muffling ; my head was giddy with the recent blow, and the keen frosty air affected me severely. I asked the corporal if they were conducting me to the ford of the Lahn.

“Not quite so far,” replied he, gruffly.

My unexpected interview with Jacqueline, her coolness, her general bearing, had all bewildered me, and painfully wounded my self-esteem and pride, crushing my old love, and creating an emotion that wavered between wonder and—shall I term it so?—disgust. She had proved so cold-blooded, so—but enough of Jacqueline ; let me to my story, or we shall never make an end. Again I asked my guides whither they were conveying me, and their object ?

“Beelzebub !” muttered the corporal ; “how impatient you are. You will find out too soon, perhaps. Karl, are we a mile from the schloss yet ?”

“Scarcely,” grumbled Kaarsboom, looking back.

I recalled the whispered order of Bourgneuf, and the terrible conviction came upon me that I was to be conducted to the *distance* of a mile or so, where the *sound of firing might not disturb* the countess—to be there shot and *buried in the snow* ! Thus did a keen sense of danger supply the wanting words. What was I to do—unarmed, weak, weary and powerless ? I could grapple with neither of my guards without the risk of being shot by the other ; and to be led out thus—I, an officer on parole, a prisoner of war, protected by the promise of the Duc de Broglie—led out to be butchered

by two ruffians, and without a struggle—the thought was too dreadful for contemplation. But such was the intended sequel to that night's adventures. Halting close to a thicket about a mile distant from the schloss, the irregular outline of which was clearly defined against the starry sky, the corporal told me to “stand still, or march ten paces forward, and then turn round.”

“For what purpose?”

“You will soon see,” replied Kaarseboom, as he slapped the butt of his musket with cool significance, and proceeded to kick, or scoop with his feet, a long trench in the soft snow.

“You do not—you cannot mean to butcher me here?” said I, following them closely.

“*Halte là !* Stand where you are,” cried the corporal, “or, *nom d'un Pape !* I will shoot you down with my muzzle at your head. *Ah, sacré !—canaille—Rosbif !*”

A wild beating of the heart ; a dryness of the lips, which I strove to moisten with my tongue ; a dull sense of stupor and alarm, all soon to end, came over me, when cocking their pieces they retired backward close to the thicket. After carefully examining their priming, they were in the act of raising the butts to their shoulder to take aim, when thinking that all was over with me in this world, I strove to call to memory a prayer, and something like a solemn invocation of God was forming on my lips, when both muskets exploded *upwards* in the air, and their reports rung far away on the frosty atmosphere, making me give an involuntary and spasmodic leap nearly a yard high. I looked, and lo ! there were my corporal and his Teuton comrade lying prostrate in the snow, while

a man of great stature, armed with a large cudgel, was brandishing it above them, and kicking them the while with uncommon vehemence and vigour.

"Lie there, ye loons!" he exclaimed, in a dialect I had little difficulty in recognising even in that exciting moment; "I have gi'en you a Liddesdale cloure, and *you* a Lockerbie lick on the chaffets—ye unco' vermin!" Then he proceeded to twirl his ponderous cudgel—a branch recently torn from a tree—round his head to dance among the snow and to sing—

"Wha daur meddle wi' me?
Wha daur meddle wi' me?
My name is wee Jock Elliot,
So wha daur meddle wi' me?"

On advancing, I found to my astonishment that my protector was my comrade, Big Hob Elliot of the Scots Greys!

CHAPTER LXI.

THE DEAD HUSSAR.

"'Ods, sir, the hand o' Providence is in this!" exclaimed Hob, capering among the snow with renewed joy, but rather clumsily in his heavy jack boots; and so you are the puir Redcoat thae devils were gaun to butcher!"

"How came you here, Hob?" I inquired in a somewhat agitated voice.

"How came you here, yourself, sir? But we hae nae time for spiering; we'll tak' their muskets and awa' to some place o' safety."

In a trice Hob tumbled the French corporal, who was just recovering, out of his crossbelts, and appro-

priating his cartridge-box, handed me one musket, while arming himself with the other. We then hastened at a smart pace round the thicket, leaving the two scoundrels, French and German, to rouse them as best they could, or to smother amid the snow, for Hob had dealt each a stunning blow on the head.

As we hurried on, he told me briefly and hastily that he and nine other Scots Greys had been confined in a chamber of the outworks of Ysembourg, where they were packed as closely as ever Governor Holwell's unfortunate companions were in the Black Hole at Calcutta ; but suffered from extreme cold in place of heat. It occurred to one who had been a stonemason, that the paved floor was hollow underneath, so this suggested the idea of attempting an escape.

Hob had been left with his spurs on his heels, so with these he proceeded to pick out the lime, and on raising a stone slab a vaulted place was discovered below. They resolved to explore it, and soon found that it was a passage or gallery leading to the dry ditch of the fortress, and lighted by a row of loopholes meant for enfilading by musketry the ditch itself.

Two of these loopholes were rapidly beaten or torn into one by Hob's powerful hands armed with a stone, and then the whole party crawled through into the fosse undiscovered, and just as day was breaking.

The snow, which was falling fast, concealed all noise and kept the sentinels within their boxes, so by expertly using their hands and feet the fugitives crossed the ditch and clambered up the opposite side ; but there a wooden stockade of considerable height presented itself, and while searching for an outlet they were fired on by a sentinel from above, and at the

same moment encountered an officer going his rounds with an escort of the inlying picket.

An alarm was immediately given; a scuffle, in which the escort opposed their bayonets to the unarmed men, ensued, and all were retaken save Hob Elliot, whose vast strength and activity enabled him to elude the levelled muskets, beat down two or three of the escort and escape into the obscurity of the snowy morning.

He had wandered all the ensuing day without knowing which way to turn, inspired only by the hope of reaching the Lahn, but a skirmish which had been going on between the Light Dragoons of the allies and the French Hussars had compelled him to lurk in woods and thickets, as he feared being shot at by both alike; for in his present plight, and after all he had undergone, very little of poor Hob's red coat remained, and of that the colour was somewhat dubious. Besides he was worn out with fatigue, and now nearly dead of cold, though his animal spirits bore bravely up against danger and adversity.

It was during this crisis in his affairs, that, while concealed in a clump of trees, he had seen me conducted there by the two hirelings of Bourgneuf, and but for him, at their hands I had assuredly perished by a miserable and unknown death.

We had both narrowly escaped captivity and danger; but I knew that three parties were yet out in pursuit of me, and that the ford was still guarded; so we were still in a horrible dilemma.

Refreshment and a guide were necessary; but where were we to find either? Loading the captured muskets we trod hopefully on, till we reached a small farmhouse, which to all appearance was deserted, as no smoke ascended from the chimneys, no dog barked or

cock crew in the yard, the gate of which lay open or flat upon the ground.

A skirmish between the French Dragoons and the Prussian Black Hussars had evidently taken place close by this farm; for near it several horses, were lying dead among the deep snow, and in some instances we saw spurred boots and ghastly white hands sticking up through it.

When we opened the door and entered the lower apartment the reason of the silence within it was at once accounted for, and we saw that which at another time, and to folks less case-hardened than Hob and I, would have been a very appalling spectacle.

The house had been pillaged and its usual occupants had fled; but on the table of the principal room lay a dead body muffled in a scarlet cloak, all save the feet (from which the boots had been stolen), and stiffly white and cold they protruded beyond the scarlet covering.

In a corner lay a pile of regimental coats, caps, boots, shirts, stockings, waist and shoulder-belts, all spotted, and in some instances soaked with now frozen blood; and there, too, were broken swords, bent bayonets, and wooden canteens piled up by those vile strippers of the dead, who would no doubt return ere long for their plunder, so this was no place for us to linger in.

A Prussian Hussar, in the black uniform laced with white of the King's favourite regiment, lay in another corner almost without a wound, yet quite dead, and in a pool of his own blood. A sword-point had grazed his left temple, severing the temporal artery, and he had bled to death, thus his blanched aspect was ghastly in the extreme.

"Horrible!" said I, shuddering.

"Maist deevilish!" added my companion, "but I've kenned o' waur."

Urged I knew not by what motive, for on service the emotion of mere *curiosity* soon becomes extinct, I turned down the mantle of the dead body which lay on the table, and then imagine my regret and horror on tracing in the glazed eyes, the relaxed jaw, the livid but handsome face, where the black moustache contrasted with its pallor, the Chevalier de Boisguiller, the gay and heedless Frenchman, who now lay stiff and cold in his rich Hussar uniform. He had been shot through the heart, and must have died instantly, as there was not much blood about him, but a fearful expression of agony yet distorted his features. Hob at once recognised him and said,

"He was a braw cheild, this Boygilly; but he has gane oot o' the world noo, and I daursay the damned world will never miss him."

The poor fellow's sabretache lay by him, together with his braided and tasselled Hussar pelisse and fur cap. I opened the former, and found it contained the two despatches from the Duc de Broglie to Maréchal de Contades, for which he had waited at Ysembourg on the night I left it. They detailed some future operations that were to take place on the heights of Corbach, and enclosed Monjoy's diagrams of parallels and approaches before the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, and all of these I knew would prove of inestimable value to our leader, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. I now conceived the idea of passing myself off for my poor friend, whose character on this side of the Lahn was certainly a safer one than my own. I threw off my red coat, and put on his fur-trimmed

pelisse and Hussar cap, together with his belt and sabretache, with its valuable papers. Grim through this masquerading, Hob Elliot, who had been investigating several cupboards, and overhauling some haversacks, in which he found only a biscuit or two, laughed with stentorian lungs when he saw me attired in French uniform. Then he presented me with a biscuit, saying,

“’Ods, sir, we maun e’en feed oursel’s in this wilderness o’ a place, for the ravens are no likely to do it.”

To him I gave the scarlet cloak and a suitable forage cap, and after vainly searching the house for anything it might contain in the shape of more food or spirits, of which we stood much in need, we set out about mid-day with a story framed to suit any French party we might meet in our wanderings. I knew poor Boissguiller so well that I could if necessary imitate his voice and manner; and as we were much about the same height and complexion, I had no fear of passing myself off successfully for the chevalier. Yet, if discovered, we now ran a terrible risk of being hanged or shot as spies, or prisoners escaping, or it might be for having slain the man whose uniform I wore and whose papers I carried. We met no one to guide us, while proceeding in what we conceived, by the gradual descent of the road and rivulets, to be the direction of the Lahn, until just as the dusk of the short winter eve was closing in, we saw a party of six French soldiers of the Line, muffled up in their greatcoats, their muskets slung, their three-cornered hats pulled well over their faces, and their hands thrust in their pockets for warmth, coming leisurely towards us. We had nothing for it now but to advance boldly and meet them, and the reader may conceive that my emotions

were far from soothing on finding myself confronted by Arnaud de Pricorbin, and the same men whom I had so recently met at the ford.

CHAPTER LXII.

ARNAUD DE PRICORBIN.

WHEN about twenty paces distant they halted, and as the evening was dusky cast about their muskets. Then Arnaud cried with a loud voice,

"Qui va là ?"

Hob Elliot very unwisely replied in his native tongue, and bade him go to—it was not Heaven. On this Pricorbin slapped the butt of his musket and challenged again.

"La France," said I, in a very confident tone, and still continuing to advance ; *"I am the Chevalier de Boisguiller, going towards Freyenthal on special service."*

"Boisguiller of the Hussars de la Reine ?"

"Oui, mon camarade," said I, with a jaunty air.

"Bon Dieu ! M. le Chevalier on foot ?"

"My horse was shot in a skirmish yesterday."

"Tais-toi, nous serrons entendus, monsieur," said Arnaud, in a subdued voice, and presenting arms as I came close to him.

"Pourquoi ?" said I, with affected impatience.

"Because the King of Prussia's Black Hussars are within musket shot of us."

"Where ?"

"Among yonder trees," said all the soldiers together in a whisper.

"It matters not to me," said I ; *"we go under cartel."*

I now perceived that one of the six soldiers had his head and face tied up with bloodstained handkerchiefs.

"And this big Gendarme?" inquired Arnaud, pointing to Hob Elliot.

"My guide from Ysembourg."

"Had he better not return with us? Monsieur is close to the ford."

Instead of replying to this uncomfortable suggestion, I asked "Have you found him you watched for?"

"The escaped prisoner?"

"*Diable*—yes."

"No, monsieur," he replied, with a malediction, in which the others, especially he of the slashed visage, heartily joined, while stamping their feet and blowing their fingers; "and so, after being half-frozen, we have left the ford in despair."

"Well—in yonder cottage on the slope of the hill you will find him lying dead, with his red coat beside him."

"*Très bon*!—but I have some brandy here, M. le Chevalier," said Arnaud, presenting his canteen.

"*A votre santé, mon camarade*," said I, drinking and handing the vessel to Hob, who without the smallest compunction and with a leer in his eye drained it to the last drop. "Diable! 'tis a cold night—I shaved off my moustache to avoid icicles; now, *camarade*, the direct road to the ford?"

"Is this we are on, monsieur—a half-mile further will bring you to it, but beware of the Hussars."

The deception was complete, and away they went double quick to the dreary cottage on the hill.

Amid the darkness which had now set in, we reached the willow bushes and scattered rocks at the ford, the scene of my late affair with its watchers, and there a

hoarse challenge in German rung through the frosty air upon our right. Then issuing from a thicket of pines, we saw a patrol of twenty of those dark and sombre fellows, the King of Prussia's Death's-head Hussars, riding slowly toward us.

They were all mounted (like our own corps) upon grey horses, their uniform was black, trimmed with silver or white braid, and skulls and cross-bones grimly adorned their caps, saddle-cloths and accoutrements. It was commonly said that the Black Hussars neither took nor gave quarter. Of this I know not the truth; but under the gallant and intrepid General Ziethen, they gained a glorious reputation during the Seven Years' War.

I speedily made myself known to the officer in command. He informed me that my corps, which he knew well by its reputation, and by the grey horses and grenadier caps of their riders, had suddenly left all the villages of the Lahn and marched to Osnaburg (thirty-seven miles from Minden) a town which Hob and I reached, after undergoing no small degree of suffering and privation, about the beginning of January; and happy were we when we saw the union-jack flying above the fortress on the Petersburg, and our sentinels in their familiar red coats at the gates.

Then indeed did we feel at home, and that night in Tom Kirkton's quarters opposite the Dominican monastery, over a smoking rasher of Westphalian bacon and a crown bowl of steaming brandy punch, I had the pleasure of relating to old Colonel Preston and other brother officers all our adventures after my fashionable friend Shirley had blown up the bridge of the Lahn.

One of the first persons I inquired for was this

gallant major, who, however, was elsewhere with the staff of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick ; but I was determined to settle my little score with him on the first suitable occasion. We had a jovial reunion ; many times was the punchbowl replenished. Tom Kirkton gave us his favourite ditty, and then the old Colonel in a voice somewhat cracked, struck up—

“Malbrook s'en va t'en guerre, (and)
Mironton, Mironton, Mirontaine !”

chorussed all to the clank of glasses and drinking-horns. My indignation was great on finding, that not content with betraying me into the hands of the enemy, Shirley, to blacken my professional reputation, had forwarded to the Marquis of Granby, General of our cavalry, a report to the effect, that “by culpable negligence Cornet Gauntlet had delayed to recross the Lahn, and had *permitted* himself to be taken prisoner, thus *betraying* into the hands of the enemy ten men and ten horses of his Majesty's Scots Grey Dragoons.”

The corps were so furious at this aspersion that they cast lots for who should call him out ; it fell on a Captain named Cunningham, who sent at once a challenge, which the Major declined on the prudent plea that “he could deal with the principal only,” but worthy old Colonel Preston, who had seen the whole affair from the tower of Freyenthal, cleared me of all the imputations of Shirley, whom I would have punished severely by horsewhip and pistol, had he not been mortally wounded in a skirmish on the 10th of January, when he expired in the hands of two soldiers who were earrying him to the rear in his sash. On the day after I reached Osnaburg, Tom Kirkton, with Scotch smirk in his face, handed me a letter addressed

in a lady's small Italian hand. It proved to be a kind one from my cousin Aurora—"the little usurper," as I named her; "the fair pretender," as she was styled by Tom. Well, thought I, amid the horrors of war and the bitterness of such a wayward passion as that I cherished for the French girl, it *is* something above all price to have a pure English heart to remember, to pray for, and perhaps to lose me, as this dear Aurora does at home. In a postscript she sent her "best duty and kind regards to Major Shirley of the Staff."

"Poor devil!" muttered Tom, who was shaving himself for parade, and using the back of his watch as a mirror.

Having nothing else in the shape of uniform, I had to wear poor Boisguiller's gay Hussar pelisse on parade and on duty for some days, until our quartermaster supplied me with a sergeant's coat (minus its chevrons, of course), a trooper's sword, pistols and accoutrements; and in this motley guise I made my *début* as Lieutenant of the Light Troop (and served in it during the remainder of the campaign), for so valuable were the despatches regarding the projected movements of the French on the heights of Corbach and before the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, that for procuring them I had been appointed to a Lieutenancy in the 2nd Dragoon Guards by Prince Ferdinand, and then gazetted back into my own corps—the boys who were *second to none*, and whom I had no desire to leave.

We moved soon after to Schledhausen. There we remained until the month of May, when we marched through a country covered with forests to Frittlar, a small town which belonged to the Elector of Mentz,

where we were brigaded with the 11th Light Dragoons under General Elliot till the month of June, when the army again took the field.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE HEIGHTS OF CORBACH.

THE allied British and Germans under Prince Ferdinand, though less numerous than the troops under the Duc de Broglie, were in fine fighting order, yet they prudently acted chiefly on the defensive.

The Duc de Broglie having quarrelled with the Comte de St. Germain who commanded the army of the Rhine, generally failed to act in concert with him, and thus saved the Prince from the, perhaps fatal, hazard of meeting their united strength in another general action. Prior to this quarrel (which ultimately compelled the Count to retire from the service) the French arms had been very successful.

They had overrun the whole Landgraviate of Hesse, with their grand army, leaving troops to blockade the castles of Marburg and Dillenburg, the operations before which were successfully conducted on the plans of Gervais Monjoy, while St. Germain marched through Westphalia to form a junction with the Maréchal Duc, who, by the 10th of July, had encamped on the heights of Corbach.

On hearing that his two castles had fallen into the hands of the French, Prince Ferdinand, whom the papers I had found in the sabretache of Boisguiller had fully informed of the intended movement towards Corbach, commenced a retreat from Fritzlar towards the river Dymel ; and sent his son, the Hereditary

Prince, with a strong detachment towards Sachsenhausen where he meant to encamp. Some British troops, horse and foot, accompanied the young Prince on this expedition, and of these our regiment unluckily formed a part.

We continued to advance without opposition until the 30th of the month, when on coming in sight of the heights of Corbach and the distant town of Ysembourg, we found a body of French troops formed in order of battle and barring our march to Sachsenhausen.

Their strength seemed to be about ten battalions and fifteen squadrons, so far as we could judge at first.

"Now who or what the devil may these be?" we asked of each other, when we saw their arms shining in the sun, their colours waving in the wind, and the long line of white coats, three ranks deep, appear on the green mountain slope, where we had no idea of meeting any troops at all.

"Oh," said several, especially the staff officers who were spurring to and fro, in evident excitement; "'tis only the vanguard of the Comte de St. Germain, whom we must drive in."

The order was instantly given for the infantry to attack, the cavalry to support, and now began a brief but sharp, and to us very fatal engagement.

It was the noon of a lovely summer day.

Near us the Itter was rolling a blue flood between the green mountains, its banks fringed by light waving willows and dark wild laurels; beyond an opening or pass in the mountains where some French artillery were in position, we saw a fair and fertile plain, dotted by poplar trees, stretching far away in the sun-

light, and the quaint old town of Corbach, with its ruddy walls and latticed windows that glittered like plates of gold.

Our infantry began the affair with great spirit, and none stood to their colours more bravely than our 51st Foot, Brudenel's old corps, which was led by a gallant soldier, Lieutenant-Colonel Noel Fury.

The young Prince soon found that he had made a reckless mistake, and was engaged with the united strength of the French army, and with no vanguard or detached force like his own ! It was too late to recede, so madly we strove by bayonet and sabre to hew a passage towards Sachsenhausen, but strove in vain, as De Broglie constantly poured forward fresh supports ; and although the main body of the allies under Prince Ferdinand was but a few miles in our rear, such was the nature of the ground that they could yield us no assistance whatever ; so about two o'clock in the afternoon the trumpets sounded from right to left a retreat which it became our duty to cover.

As we galloped in sections round the flank of the 51st, and just as that regiment began to fall back from its line of dead and dying, I saw a dreadful episode, caused by the French Artillery.

Thrown from a mortar, a *cartouche* fell amid their ranks, and, by its explosion, in a single moment killed and wounded five officers and sixty rank and file ! For the information of the non-military reader, I may state that this deadly missile is a case of wood about three inches thick at the bottom, bound about with marline, holding ten iron balls, each a pound in weight, and four hundred musket-balls. It had been fired from a howitzer on the rocks above the pass, and by

one of this dreadful shower of balls the young Prince was wounded in the shoulder.

When the retreat began, several of the German regiments fell into confusion, and the French were not slow in taking advantage of it. The task of repelling them fell upon the Scots Greys, with the 1st or King's and 3rd Dragoon Guards, and with enthusiastic cheers we followed the young Prince in a succession of brilliant charges, which drove the enemy back, enabling our unfortunate comrades in the Infantry to make an almost undisturbed retreat. I say almost, for the French, who continued the pursuit till evening, brought up their Flying Artillery, and in the dusk we could plainly see the fiery arcs described by the shells, which the field mortars threw at random to the distance of a thousand yards. So brightly burned the fuses, that we could avoid the falling bombs by scattering, dismounting, and throwing ourselves flat, as their exploding splinters always rise at an angle of several degrees from the earth.

On this service, which saved our Infantry from entire capture, few officers distinguished themselves more than Count Keilmansegge, Colonel Preston, and Major Hill of our 1st Dragoon Guards.

Our corps lost but one man, who, with his horse, was killed by a single cannon shot that passed between Sergeant Duff and me.

By another the Colonel of the 51st was slain. I have elsewhere mentioned two cases of presentiment, one of which was fatally realized at the time, the other afterwards. The leader of the 51st was inspired by a crushing emotion of this kind on that day at Corbach, and as the anecdote is little known, being related in the long since forgotten memoirs of a Scottish

officer who served under him, I may quote it here.

“My old Lieutenant-Colonel, Noel Fury, was one of the slain. It is said by some that individuals may be visited by an undefined presentiment or mental warning of their approaching fate, though such ideas are treated by others as visionary and impossible. I shall not attempt to enter into a discussion which might lead me into the mazes of metaphysical inquiry, but shall content myself with a simple narrative of what I witnessed on the morning of this engagement.

“Colonel Fury was remarkable for the liveliness and gaiety of his disposition, and his spirits, on an occasion like the present, when about to enter into action, were uniformly observed to be unusually elevated. His habitual sprightliness and good humour made him a general favourite in the regiment ; besides, he was a man of distinguished gallantry and an excellent officer. Among other good qualities, he paid especial attention to the filling of his canteen, and on the morning in question he sat down under a tree, inviting several of his brother officers to breakfast.

“For the *first time* in his life, on the eve of an engagement, he seemed pensive and dull, and on being rallied on the subject by some of the gentlemen present—

“‘I don’t know how it is,’ he answered, ‘but I think I shall be killed to-day.’

“The cannonade having just begun, he mounted his horse, and rode up to the regiment, where he had been but a very short time, when his head was carried off by a cannon shot.”

Our *total* loss was five hundred men, and fifteen pieces of cannon.

We rejoined the main body of the allied army full of rage and disgust at our discomfiture, and clamouring for an opportunity to encounter the foe again ; nor was it long before that opportunity came.

Among the papers found in the sabretache of Boisguiller, was one which informed Prince Ferdinand of a proposed movement of the French from Corbach towards Ziegenheim, and on this point he fixed his attention.

Not many days after our last affair, tidings came that a body of the French, commanded by Major General Glaubitz and Colonel Count Borgneuf, had advanced in that direction.

Immediately on hearing this, our leader directed the young hereditary prince, who was eager and burning to wipe out the late disgrace, to drive them back, and on this service he departed, with six battalions of Hussars, the Scots Greys, 11th Light Dragoons, Luckner's Hussars, and two brigades of Chasseurs.

In high spirits and full of ardour we marched on the 16th of July, came suddenly upon the enemy at Emsdorff, attacked them with great fury, slew a great number of all ranks, took the Major-General, all the artillery and baggage, one hundred and twenty-seven officers and two thousand two hundred soldiers prisoners.

Count Bourgneuf, however, contrived to make his escape, after a rough hand-to-hand combat with Captain Cunningham of the Greys.

In this action, our 11th Light Dragoons, popularly known as Elliot's Horse, charged no less than *five* times, and broke through the enemy at every charge ; but in these achievements they lost a great number of officers, men, and horses. Here for the first time we

found ourselves opposed to a corps of Lancers, whose weapon was then unknown in our army. When Preston led us to the charge against them, their tall lances with red pennons streaming, were erect ; but when we were within three horses' length of them, a trumpet sounded, then they lowered them all breast-high and waved their streamers, so that many of our horses shied wildly ; but we broke through them, nevertheless, and the spear-heads once passed, all was over with the Lancers.

On the 22nd of August, when we attacked the French rearguard at Zierenberg, as it was commanded by Bourgneuf, and consisted of the regiments of Bretagne and Clermont, I hoped for an opportunity of meeting my personal enemy, but was disappointed ; for although we burst into the town, which is surrounded by a wall and has three gates, and in columns of troops charged into the heart of the disordered French, cutting them down right and left, I never saw the Count, though, amid the fury and confusion of such a conflict, I must have been more than once within pistol-shot of him.

Here we had five men and nine horses killed, Colonel Preston and twenty men wounded ; but now came the affair which was known in the army as the battle of Zierenberg, where I had once again an opportunity of meeting my unscrupulous Frenchman face to face.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

WE were encamped at Warburg, when, in September, we received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move on particular service, and at an hour's notice—a troublesome communication, for we could scarcely unharness by day or by night, and had to keep our horses almost constantly saddled. At last came instructions to march, about nightfall, on a dull and gloomy evening, the 5th of September, when, with two regiments of foot (Maxwell's and the famous old 20th), the Inniskilling, and Bock's Hanoverian Dragoons, Bulow's Jagers, and one hundred and fifty Highlanders, we left the camp with all our tents standing to make a night attack upon the town of Zierenberg, which had been reinforced, and where Bourgneuf still commanded.

The forces there consisted of the *Volontaires de Clermont* and the regiments of *Dauphiné* and *Bretagne*—in all about three thousand men. Luckily, we were furnished with the password for the 5th September—*Artois*; it had been brought over by a deserter, who proved to be no other than the rascal *Arnaud de Pricorbin*, who had come into Warburg about noon, and thus betrayed his comrades, who passed their time almost careless of security, and having but slender guards and outposts.

The town, he informed us, was still a place of no strength; and, though surrounded by a dry ditch, that was shallow, and the wall within it was crumbling with age and decay.

Led by Colonel Preston, the Scots Greys were to head the attack.

As we marched, the dark and obscurity of the autumn evening deepened on the scenery. The duty was an exciting one, for the whole French army was encamped at a short distance from the point of attack, and we knew not the moment when we might find ourselves in a snare or ambush; for the story of the deserter, as to the password, the real strength of the force under Bourgneuf, and his dispositions for defence, might all be a lure, though the fellow remained in the hands of our quarter-guard as a hostage for the truth of his statements.

We crossed the river Dymel near the Hanse Town of Warburg, and saw the brown chestnut-groves that border its banks, the clear stars, and the crescent of the waning moon reflected in its current.

Ere long we saw the lights in Zierenberg and the fires of the French, whole companies of whom were bivouacked in the streets of the little town, where they made fuel of the furniture, the rafters, and floors of such houses as shot or shell had previously made too ruinous for occupation.

When within two miles of the place, the grenadiers of Maxwell, the 20th regiment, and the little band of Highlanders, made a *détour*, taking three separate routes, while we, the cavalry, took a fourth, thus completely surrounding and cutting off those who were cantoned in Zierenberg.

According to Pricorbin's information, which proved to be correct, a regiment of French dragoons were bivouacked outside the town wall and in front of the principal gate; and it was with them *we* had first to deal. We continued to advance in silence, all orders

being passed in whispers, and thus not a sound broke the stillness of the night, but the monotonous tramp of our horses' hoofs, the occasional rattle of our accoutrements, the clatter of a steel scabbard or a chain bridle, till, unluckily, some of our horses began to neigh, and we could distinctly hear some of the French chargers responding, for the air was calm, still, and clear.

"Push on—push on!" was now said by all; "the alarm is given, and we have no time to lose!"

The moon, which occasionally gave out weird gleams of silver light between the masses of dark cloud that floated slowly on the upper currents of air, was now luckily enveloped, and all the scenery was intensely dark; yet we could distinctly see the lights twinkling in the town, and the glare of the night fires, which cast flashes of lurid and wavering radiance upon the steep gables, the spire of a church, and the undefined outlines of masses of building. The French could see nothing of us; but the neighing of our nags was sufficient to give them all an *alerte*, consequently, when we came within four hundred yards of the town gate, the whole regiment of horse were in their saddles to receive whatever might be approaching.

We were advancing in close column of troops as the way was broad and open. The Inniskillings were in our rear; the light troop of ours was in front of the whole, with Colonel Preston riding between Douglas and me.

On the roadway, as we approached, we could see the black figure of a single horseman posted.

"When he challenges, Gauntlet, reply in French," whispered the Colonel; "say something to deceive him."

Preston had scarcely spoken, when the voice of the vidette rung out clearly on the night—

“*Qui vive ?*”

“*Artois,*” I replied, while we all pressed forward at a trot.

“*A quel regiment ?*” shouted the vidette, in great haste.

“*Les Hussards de la Reine,*” said I, giving the name of Boisguiller’s well-known corps, which was in the camp at Corbach.

“*Très bien !*” replied the soldier, but the next moment he could hear Preston’s words of command, given sternly and low—

“Prepare to charge—*charge !*”

The Frenchman’s carbine flashed redly through the gloom, almost in our faces ; the bullet whistled over our heads to the rear, where a fearful cry told that it had found a fatal billet among the Inniskillings ; then wheeling round his horse, he galloped to the rear, where his comrades were formed in column of squadrons.

Ere the echoes of his shot had died away on the night wind, we heard the cheers of the 20th and the sound of the Highland bagpipe, mingling with the hoarse hurrah of Bulow’s light troop, as the town was assailed on three other points at once. Then the opening musketry flashed redly in various quarters, and the gleam of sudden fires shot upward in the murky air.

Sword in hand, we burst, with the weight and fury of a landslip, among the French cavalry, and drove them back, not so much by dint of edge or point, as by the sheer weight of our men and horses. So sudden was the shock, so irresistible our charge, that they

scarcely made any resistance, but were thrust pell-mell into the town, in the narrow streets of which they were so intermingled with our men and the Inniskillings, that in many instances neither of us could use our swords. For some minutes, at this crisis, I found myself completely isolated and wedged among the French, some of whom actually laughed at the whole affair.

Captain Cunninghame, of our first troop, in consequence of a blow which had penetrated the back of his grenadier cap, fell backward on his horse's crupper insensible, but could fall no further, so dense was the living press around him ; and thus he remained until the place surrendered.

Colonel Preston, whose horse was possessed of great spirit and fire, pressed far beyond any of us ; but before he could reach the town-gate, it sprang over the bridge with him into the ditch—where the brave old boy remained up to his thighs in mud, swearing and sputtering, but in safety, until we extricated him about daybreak.

Some of the houses being set on fire lit up by their lurid glare the horrors of the night attack. Taken completely by surprise, many of the French were fighting in their shirts and breeches, and were mingled in wild *mêlée* with the 20th and Highlanders, using their bayonets and clubbed muskets, without time to load or fire, so closely were they wedged together ; but some who were in the houses opened an indiscriminate fusilade on friends and foes. This so greatly exasperated the nimble Highlanders, that in several instances they stormed these mansions, and with dirk and claymore slew without mercy all within.

Every inch of ground was disputed by death and

blood. The yells, cries, and hurrahs of the opposing combatants mingled with the clash of weapons that glittered in the fires around them—fires that reddened all the air ; but the shouts of the French grew weaker as the cheers of the British increased.

“ Hurrah for the Inniskillings !” cried we.

“ Hurrah for the Scots Greys !” cried the Irish.

“ Hurrah for Bulow’s wild Jagers !” cried both regiments.

A French officer, minus hat, wig, and coat, was dragged roughly out of a house by two furious Celts, who were jabbering and swearing in their native Gaelic, as if they had not made up their minds whether to kill or capture him, when he clung to my stirrup-leather, and without attempting to use the sword in his hand, breathlessly implored quarter.

I regarded his pale face with sudden and stern interest, for this despairing suppliant was the commandant of the town, the Comte de Bourgneuf.

I lost no time in disarming him, by snapping *his* sword across my saddle-bow, contemptuously as he had snapped mine, and desired the Highlanders to keep him prisoner. He was dragged away, and I never saw him again. It was enough ; he had *recognised me* !

His whole force, being completely surrounded and hemmed in, capitulated, but so many had perished in the attack that we brought off only forty officers and four hundred rank and file, with the colours of the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne, one of which I captured in the count’s quarters. These trophies we lodged in the camp at Warburg, after losing but few men in the whole affair.

It was on that night’s duty that I *last* saw powder burned in the Seven Years’ War.

Our infantry were encamped under canvas in the immediate vicinity of Warburg, the quaint old German streets of which presented a lively picture of campaigning life, for every house had been converted into a barrack ; soldiers in British or Hanoverian uniforms appeared at all the windows, lounging, laughing, and smoking, or pipeclaying their belts or gaiters. Piles of muskets stood in long rows upon the pavements. Here and there a sentinel trod to and fro upon his post, indicating the quarters of a colonel, or where the colours of a regiment were lodged.

In the church were stalled our horses, and there stable duty and religious service went on together ; for, as wounded men died every day in our hands, one seldom passed without a body being laid before the altar muffled in a cloak, greatcoat, or rug, prior to interment in the trench outside the gates.

After our return from the night attack at Zierenberg, I slept profoundly on the bare floor of my billet, which was in an empty house. I think one does generally sleep sound after enduring great excitement or great calamity, for it is the *waking* alone that brings back the sense of grief or danger. Prior to that came dreams, and again I seemed to hear the bayonet and sabre clashing, the shouts and the wild work of last night ; but from these I was roused about mid-day by Tom Kirkton, our adjutant, who as yet was still accoutred.

"Well, Gauntlet, old friend," said he, with a peculiar smile ; "so you and I are to part at last?"

"How — what do you mean, Tom?"

"You have been chosen by the commander-in-chief, on Colonel Preston's recommendation (a dear old fellow, isn't he ?) to convey to London, and to the king's own

hand, his despatches and the colours taken last night ; and his orders say, you must start in an hour."

"And I am to proceed—"

"By our rear. See, here is your route ; by Arensburg to Wesel, and thence down the Rhine to Nimeguen on the Waal ; thence by boat to the mouth of the West Scheldt, where some of our gun-brigs are sure to be lying."

"Zounds ! Tom — a long and tiresome journey ; alone too ! and the money ?"

"Old Blount, the Paymaster-General, furnishes that. So come, rouse thee, friend Basil—let us have a parting glass ere you go, my dear boy."

There was an unmistakeable moisture and sad expression in Tom's clear and usually merry eye as he spoke, for we had ever been the best of friends and comrades.

Within an hour after this I had packed my valise, secured the French colours and the Prince's despatches in a large saddle-bag—had bade adieu to our good old colonel,* to Tom Kirkton, Douglas, and others, and departed with sincere regret. Hob Elliot and many of the Greys—brave, good, honest fellows—accompanied me to the town gate, and the farewell cheer they gave me as I passed through the Infantry camp rings yet in my ear and in my heart, as it did then when I waved my cap, and said "God bless you !"

* He died at Bath, in 1785, a Lieutenant-General, and still Colonel of the Scots Greys.—*Regimental Record*, p. 127.

CHAPTER LXV.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

BEFORE I reached England, some changes had taken place of which we had as yet heard nothing in our camps and cantonments in Germany.

The king had died in October; his grandson had been proclaimed by the title of George III., and already the Court was out of mourning, for the new monarch had succeeded a father who had been hated by the late king, and whom *he* was never known to name or to speak of during the whole of his long life; no one knows *why*, but so it is, that the memory of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, was speedily committed to oblivion.

After a narrow escape from a French privateer, I was landed by a returned transport at Portsmouth, and travelled post to the English metropolis, halting for a night at the Red Lion at Guildford, where the landlord perfectly remembered the affair of the highwayman in the chimney, and insisted on my sharing with him a crown bowl of punch in the good old fashion, while I fought all my battles over again.

Next evening, without encountering a breakdown of the rickety vehicle, an overturn on the wretched roads, a masked highwayman, or other adventure, I saw before me mighty London, with the double domes and peristyles of Greenwich shining in the sun, and the old battered fellows who had fought under Anson, Hawke, and Boscawen enjoying their pipes on the terrace; then the glorious Thames, with its myriad shipping, and the flags of all the world (France excepted) flying over them; the vast façade of St.

Paul's—the great square mass of the Tower, which made me think of the jewels, the crown, the chains and dungeons of tyrants long since gone to their account, and of that long line of Norman and English kings whom we may still see there, with their wax faces and dusty armour, ranged rank and file in the Armoury.

Anon I was amid the roar and bustle of Fleet-street and the Strand, and had passed under Temple Bar, whereon were still, white bleached, and bare, the skulls of those who perished for principle and their king, though the brothers of some of them led the ranks of our Scottish corps at Minden.

I put up at the King George in Pall Mall, where, for the first night for many, many months, I could take mine ease in mine inn, and where from the windows I could see the flaring links and flambeaux, the sedans and coaches, of those who were proceeding to the theatres, opera, balls, or elsewhere.

I thought of the time when I had been last in London, under such different circumstances—when I had come with the despatch concerning the French spies—I, a simple orderly dragoon—concerning that wretch Hautois, before we sailed from Portsmouth for Brittany, and ages seemed to have elapsed since then.

After all I had seen of war, I agreed to the full with my Lord Clarendon, in all his views and remarks on the virtues and blessings of peace.

At the George I felt myself apparently amid lavish luxury! Yet even carpets were almost unknown in English bed-rooms during the early part of George III.'s reign; but it seemed to me that a comfortable home, a blazing sea-coal fire, soft hearthrugs, warm curtains, a smoking dinner and singing tea-turn, a

pretty English wife, with her true domestic love (and a most becoming dress, of course), to do the honours of one's house and table, a tranquil life, and all that kind of thing, were a thousand times better than pipe-clay and glory, after all ; better than turning out by drumbeat or bugle-call in a dark rainy morning, to march fasting, to shoot or be shot at ; better than to hear the winter sleet rattling on the wet tent, or to endure it in the wetter bivouac ; and so indeed thought I, Basil Gauntlet, when on that night of December I tucked myself cosily in a warm bed at the George, in Pall Mall, and went off to sleep with the "drowsy hum" of London in my ears.

Next day I presented my credentials at the Horse Guards, obtained six months' leave of absence, and was informed that there would be a royal drawing-room at Kensington Palace in two days after ; and the commander-in-chief kindly added that he would arrange for my presentation by his Grace the Duke of Argyle, who was full colonel of my own Regiment, and was then in town. So, for two days I was free to roam about the streets in search of amusement.

Ignorant of London, I stumbled first into the wooden house in Marylebone-fields, and saw a couple of sword-players slashing each other with rapiers on a platform to the sound of French horns and a tenor drum ; then followed a game at quarterstaff, while the boxes and galleries were crowded by men of the first position, betting-book in hand, sword at side, and the hat cocked knowingly over the right eye. From these, I rambled to Don Saltero's Museum, to see his stuffed rhinoceroses, tigers, and monsters ; thence to an auction in Cornhill, where, among other effects of a bankrupt shipbroker, a young negro woman was put up to

sale and bought by a Newmarket gentleman for 32*l*.

As a soldier I could not resist going to see the home battalions of the Foot Guards exercised at the King's Mews, near Charing Cross. Then I dined at a chocolate-house, summoned a chair, and was swung off at a trot to the opera, where I heard one of Mr. Handel's performances hissed down as quite unequal to the "Beggars' Opera."

Next day I found a card waiting me at my hotel. The Duke expected me to dine with him on that day, if not otherwise engaged.

I found his Grace and the Duchess waiting to receive me with great kindness and affability.

He was John Campbell of Mamore, who had lately succeeded to the dukedom, after long service in Flanders and Germany; he was now a Lieutenant general, Governor of Limerick, and a Scottish representative Peer; she was Mary, daughter of John, Lord Bellenden of Auchinoule, a handsome and stately woman, but now well up in years.

He asked me many questions about the regiment, and inquired if "auld Geordie Preston still adhered to his buff coat." He also made a few queries, but with reserve, about the Cavalry movements at Minden, and the charges brought against Lord George Sackville. On such matters the gentle Duchess was silent; moreover, she always shrunk from military matters, as she had never recovered the loss of her second son, Lord Henry Campbell, who had been killed at the battle of Lafeldt.

Perceiving how threadbare my fighting-jacket was — (it was the sergeant's coat I had procured at Os-naburgh) — I proposed to get a court dress, or a new

suit of regimentals for the presentation to-morrow.

"Nay, nay," said the Duke; "come as you are—we shall drive to the Palace in my coach, and believe me, the ladies will like you all the better in your purple coat. It looks like work—zounds! yes. And, by-the-bye, if you want any franks for the North, or to hear a debate in the Upper House, don't forget to command me."

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

A PRESENTATION at Court may be a very exciting thing to those who are unused to such scenes; but to me, nothing whatever could prove a source of excitement yet, for no man is more self-possessed, less interested in a mere spectacle, or in whom the feeling of curiosity is so dead, for a time at least, as one who has served a campaign or two.

During the reign of the late king and the early part of his successor's, drawing-rooms occurred very frequently, and royalty presented itself to the nobility and gentry at least twice weekly; but from various circumstances—perhaps the recent mourning, so hastily laid aside—on this occasion the attendance was unusually great, and when the carriage of the Duke, who wore the uniform of Colonel of the Greys, with the star and dark green ribbon of the Thistle, reached Kensington Palace-gate, we found it quite blocked up by brilliant equipages, sedan chairs, and livery servants, having huge cocked hats, long canes, and in some instances bouquets of artificial flowers.

From the portico of the Palace to the presence chamber, the Yeomen of the Guard, under Viscount Torrington, and the Gentlemen Pensioners, under the Lord Berkeley of Stratton, lined all the corridors and guarded the entrances, their showy uniforms contrasting powerfully with my patched and war-worn suit of harness, which, sooth to say, seemed odd enough, for my silver epaulettes were reduced to mere tufts of black wire; my once crimson sash to dingy fritters, my jack-boots were of no particular tint, and my spurs, like my scabbard, were a mass of rust.

But I carried over my left arm the standards of the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne; and they secured me some interest, in the eyes of the ladies at least—the beauty and fashion of the first court in the world—as they thronged past, in hoops and brocades, their fine hair dredged with powder, and their soft cheeks obscured by rouge and patches.

My grandfather had disinherited me; true! I had nothing in the world but my sword and my wretched pay as a sub; I was not the Lord of Netherwood, moor and hill, hall and river; but I was Basil Gauntlet, of Minden and Zierenberg—and they, at least, were something to be heir to.

As we entered the gallery which leads to the black marble staircase, two gentlemen, one of whom was dressed in scarlet richly embroidered with gold, and who wore a very full periwig—the other, who was attired in a purple velvet suit corded with silver, and who had on a sword of unusual length, and a bag wig, entered into conversation with the Duke, who presented me to them as an officer of his regiment.

The first was the groom of the stole, the famous Earl of Bute, the future premier, the foe of Wilkes and the

London mob ; the other was my Lord Huntingdon, Master of the Horse, and both were pleased to say many handsome things concerning our regiment and its services during the war. Moreover, the Lord Bute was pleased to manifest his friendship for me, by presenting his snuff-box of light-blue Sevres china, which he always carried in the flap-pocket of his waistcoat.

The heat and crowd were great ; many had already been presented, and some were withdrawing as we passed slowly through several rooms of the old summer palace, the walls of which were hung with rich tapestry and ornamented by many pictures and busts on pedestals. Among others, my Lord Bute and his Grace pointed out to me the Venus of Titian and the Infant Saviour by Rubens, the dark Holbeins, some works of Albert Durer, and the full-lengths of Orange William and Mary Stuart, his queen—the former all nose and white wig, the latter with a mass of frizzled locks and a very bare bosom ; and so, by gently pressing onward, we found ourselves in the presence-chamber, amid all the glitter and splendour of the court.

At the further end, on a chair of state under a rich canopy of crimson velvet, heavily laced, sat a fair-complexioned and smooth-faced young man, of a mild but most undignified and somewhat flabby aspect, who wore the uniform of the Foot Guards, with the magnificent collar and order of the Garter sparkling on his breast, and who had his powdered hair brushed back, queued, and simply tied with a black ribbon.

“’Tis the king !” whispered the Duke of Argyle and my Lord Bute at the same time.

I had never been in a palace or stood in such a presence before, and until now, had been more occu-

pied by the beauty of the ladies and the splendour of their jewels and dresses ; but I felt a strange thrill in my heart—*blasé* as it was by the excitement of campaigning—when I looked on the mild face of this same young king, who was then in his twenty-third year, who had a threefold ball and treble sceptre to wield, and who had declared it to be his proudest boast that he was the FIRST of his race who had drawn breath on British soil, and that he gloried in it !

Many presentations went forward before it came to my turn. I saw Carolina, Countess of Ancrum, a stately woman, in a dress of white satin, superbly spangled with gold, and drawn up in festoons by cords of gold, to display an under-petticoat of scarlet velvet, studded with seed-pearls, advance towards the throne. Her hair was powdered white as snow, and tied over a cushion about five inches high. With a low courtesy she was presenting to his majesty, who bowed graciously, a very graceful girl, whose back unfortunately, was towards us ; but I could admire the wonderful fairness of her neck and shoulders, over which some heavy ringlets fell from the high cushion or pad, above which her golden hair, all undisguised by powder, was dressed and tied with knots of scarlet ribbon. Her dress was of scarlet and white striped satin, embroidered with gold on all the seams, and as they withdrew, courtesying backward—

“Gauntlet, ’tis our turn now,” said the Duke, while he took me by the left hand and led me forward to the steps of the throne, which were covered with crimson cloth.

“Permit me,” said he, “to present to your majesty Sir Basil Gauntlet, of my regiment, the 2nd Dragoons—an officer who, by his personal bravery, has con-

tributed not a little to maintain their old historic character of being *Second to None*.

"Good!—second to none—good, very good!" said the young king, bowing very pleasantly, and presenting his hand, which I suppose I was expected to kiss; but which, in my ignorance, I shook very cordially, to the amusement of many fine lords and macaronies who stood by. I coloured, but said confidently—

"Commissioned by his Serene Highness Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, General of the allies, I have been sent from our camp at Warburg in Westphalia, to lay at your majesty's feet these trophies, the standards of the regiments of Dauphiné and Bretagne, captured in our late attack on Zierenberg."

From my hands the king took the colours, which were of blue silk, with the royal crown and cypher of France. One bore the silver fleurs-de-lys; the other the golden dolphin of Dauphiné in a field ermine, and both exhibited the holes where many a bullet had passed. He thanked me in a very handsome manner, while all the brilliant groups which crowded that magnificent apartment drew near to observe and to listen.

Something of my story, perhaps of my early misfortunes, my unmerited wrong, and my enlistment, with a hundred fables tacked thereto, had been buzzed or whispered about; thus I found many bright eyes and well-powdered personages in fashionable paste-board skirts regarding me with well-bred interest.

"Good!" said the king, whose eloquence seldom overflowed; "this is very good, and your services shall be duly appreciated. Did you serve at Minden?"

"I had the honour."

"In the cavalry?"

“Yes, sire—In the Scots Greys.”

At these words, a gentleman in a brigadier wig and suit of grey, corded with silver, turned abruptly and surveyed me with a louring eye. He was no other than my Lord George Sackville, who hated the Scots—as he afterwards did the Americans—because ten of the sixteen generals who found him guilty of misconduct at Minden were born north of the Tweed; and so blindly did he hate that portion of Britain, that for a time he was universally believed to be the author of “Junius’ Letters;” thus, at the mention of the Greys, ’tis no wonder that he started as if a wasp had stung him.

The king gave the standards to my Lord Huntingdon, and bowed to us again, as we now withdrew to make way for others. In retiring, I then perceived near the throne one who had good reason to remember with gratitude and respect the uniform of a Scots Grey, the little Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of York, whom Jack Charters had saved from drowning when the man-o’-war’s boat was smashed by a cannon shot near Querqueville Point at Cherbourg.

I was mentioning this episode to the Duke of Argyle, who felt an interest in everything that related to his regiment, when suddenly a charming voice said “Basil!” in my ear, a hand was laid softly and timidly on my arm, two smiling blue eyes looked calmly into mine, and I found before me the fair girl, she with the golden-hair, the scarlet-striped dress and blue crape petticoat—my cousin, Aurora!

She now presented me to her chaperone, the Countess of Ancrum, who had been Lady Caroline d’Arcy, only daughter of the Earl of Holderness. She in turn presented me to several ladies, who plied me with the

usual simple and silly questions about the war and certain officers who were serving with the army, until Aurora passed her arm through mine, and we began to converse about ourselves.

Aurora was indeed very beautiful, and when I looked on her delicate skin and brilliant English complexion, "how," thought I, "could I ever admire a dark French-woman, or any but a blue-eyed girl?"

"I was so proud when I saw you led forward to the king!" said Aurora, "and to see you looking so well and gallant, Basil. Do you know that all the ladies here quite envy my cousinship?"

"Aurora, how you flatter! One would think that you had been among the French and not I."

"And what think you of the young king?"

"I am charmed by his condescension."

"Yet scandal says he is married to a pretty quakeress named Hannah Lightfoot, though about to espouse the Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz," whispered Aurora. "What think you of that, forsooth?"

"I wish you would not say such things, cousin!"

"Your loyalty is shocked, is it? Well, I shall not whisper treason, even in your ear," replied Aurora, who proceeded to point out several persons to me, and to make remarks on them that were witty enough at times.

"Who is that tall man with the blue ribbon?"

"He with the military stride, who seems to go right, left—right, left, head up, and queue straight?"

"Yes," said I, laughing.

"That is the gallant old Earl of Crawford, who led the Scottish Horse Guards in Flanders."

"And that dapper little man in the orange-coloured suit, whom he is now presenting?"

"The Chevalier Chassegras de Lery, the *first* of his Majesty's new Canadian subjects that has appeared in London, where, I can assure you, he is greatly run after. He was wounded in the siege of Quebec, and assisted to bury the Marquis of Montcalm. But look you, cousin, look!" continued Aurora, laughing and blushing behind her large scarlet fan; do you see that grim-looking old gentlewoman in green brocade?"

"Whom a bishop is presenting—yes."

"The late king died in her arms. She is the Countess of Yarmouth."

"Sophia de Walmoden!"

"Yes. Listen!—she is returning thanks for her pension of 4000*l.* per annum for services rendered to his Majesty's royal grandfather. For all his victories over the French the brave Sir Edward Hawke gets exactly *half* that sum."

With some interest I surveyed this old personage in paint, patches, and brocade; she who had wrought poor Charters such mischief in his youth, when he was about eighteen, and she perhaps six and thirty.

But now the dusk was setting in; I missed his grace of Argyle, or perhaps he thought his duty to me ended at the foot of the throne, and it was an odd coincidence that Aurora also lost her chaperone, Lady Ancrum; thus I had to escort her to the Palace-gate.

"You must come to Netherwood for the shooting, Basil," said she, as we traversed the long corridors of the palace; "at the Hall I keep a strange souvenir of you," she continued laughing—"an old blunderbuss—do you remember it?"

"No."

"You cannot have forgotten that night on Wends-

worth Common, and the old blunderbuss which so terrified John Trot?"

"How could I forget the first time I met you Aurora!—but here is your chair."

Two yeomen of the guard made way for us with their partisans; John Trot was in attendance with cane and link, as I handed Aurora into her sedan, hooped-petticoat, skirt, *toupée* and all.

"While in London, Basil, remember that you make our house in Piccadilly your home."

"*Our!*" thought I in perplexity, as two soft hands held mine during this speech, and two blue eyes looked kindly into mine. I was becoming a timid fellow again, or I know not what privilege of cousinship I might have claimed had we been elsewhere than amid that crowd at Kensington Palace-gate.

"I live in Piccadilly with an old lady-friend, or rather, I should say she lives with me—my companion, an officer's widow. You will lunch with us to-morrow—two is the hour, and we shall expect you. Adieu."

She was borne off at a trot by her chairmen in the Gauntlet livery, while I set out on foot to return to "mine inn," the King George the Third, in Pall Mall.

CHAPTER LXVII.

COUSIN AURORA.

I FELT pleased and flattered by the whole events of the day; especially by the beauty, the charming frankness of Aurora, and the decided preference she showed for me; the more so that she was an object of no little attraction to the powdered beaux who crowded the

court of the young king. And to think that my poor red coat eclipsed all their finery.

Betines next day I had my hair dressed by a fashionable perruquier ; I took a promenade in Pall Mall, and left a card for a friend at White's Chocolate House. He was a brother of Douglas of ours, and belonged to the Scots Foot Guards, but was absent recruiting in Edinburgh. About mid-day, I presented myself at my cousin's mansion, old Sir Basil Gauntlet's town residence, in Piccadilly. It was one of the largest and best style of houses in that fashionable quarter. Master John Trot appeared at the door in answer to my summons, and opened it wide enough and with a sufficiently low bow, as I had exchanged my old, weather-beaten and blood-stained fighting-jacket, for a fashionable suit of French grey velvet, laced with silver.

I found Aurora in the drawing-room, with her companion, a pleasing old gentlewoman in a towering *toupée*, high red-heeled shoes and black lace mittens—Madame Blythe (as she was named in the old Scoto-French fashion) a widow of the captain-lieutenant of Lord Ancrum's dragoons, who had been killed in action, so the poor woman's heart warmed towards me as a gentleman of the cloth.

After a few of the ordinary remarks about the weather, followed by a few more about the ceremony of yesterday, luncheon was announced by John Trot, and we descended by a splendid staircase, hung with effigies of departed Gauntlets, depicted by Lely and Kneller, in wigs and corslets, to the dining-room, past a line of servants in livery, aiguilleted and covered with braid, like state trumpeters.

Over the carved marble mantelpiece hung a portrait

of an old gentleman, in a square skirted coat, corded with gold, a voluminous wig and wide riding-boots, in the act of grasping the reins of a roan charger.

"'Tis dear old grandpapa's portrait, painted by Mr. Joshua Reynolds." (He had not been knighted yet.)

"One of the most rising artists in London," added Madame Blythe, in an explanatory tone.

"'Tis very like you, Basil," said Aurora, laying kindly on my shoulders a plump white hand that glittered with turquoise and diamond rings.

I did not feel flattered, as "dear old grandpapa's" Bardolph's snout was somewhat like an over-ripe peach; but altogether, in his jolly obesity he in no way resembled the old *ursa-major* I had pictured him—perhaps Mr. Reynolds flattered. However, I could scarcely refrain from frowning at it when Aurora did not observe me, and when I thought of the will which he and old Nathan Wylie had concocted between them; and then of the handsome legacy—one shilling sterling coin of this realm—bequeathed to me when quartered at Portsmouth.

"My brother Tony—poor unfortunate Tony!—hangs opposite in his green hunting dress—another of Mr. Reynolds' efforts," said Aurora.

"Ah, indeed!" said I, attending to my ham and chicken, and turning my back upon the portraiture of Cousin Tony, who looked out of the gilded frame very much as he did on that afternoon when he and his grooms Dick and Tom laid their whips across my shoulders near Netherwood Hall.

"What length of time do you mean to spend in London?" asked Aurora, amid our desultory conversation. "Your health, cousin, and welcome home," she added, as John Trot filled my glass.

"I shall spend my six months' leave. I have no friends to visit, and nowhere to go, cousin, unless back to my regiment."

"Six months—delightful! Now, Basil, with your figure and pretensions, I am sure we shall find a charming if not a rich wife for you. Shall we not, Madame Blythe?"

"Thanks, Aurora. A rich one I would need, with my poor sub's pay," said I, with a smile.

I glanced involuntarily round me and the splendour and luxury, the evidence of ample wealth—wealth of which I had cruelly been deprived—galled and fretted me. Furtive though the glance, it was so expressive that Aurora coloured, and said, smiling—

"What think you of the Lady Louisa Kerr, the Countess of Ancrum's eldest daughter? She spoke much about you, and was at the drawing-room, in blue, flowered with silver."

"Nay, I have no idea of casting my eyes so high."

"Or so *far off*," added Madame Blythe, archly.

"Perhaps you have left your heart in Germany?"

"On the contrary I have brought it back safe and sound, cousin. More wine—thank you, yes."

"'Tis some of the last of dear old grandpapa's favourite port," said Aurora, making a sign to Mr. Trot.

"But there is time enough yet for me to think of marrying, Aurora."

"Perhaps you agree with Shakespeare, that

" 'A young man married, is a man marrèd.' "

"Nay, dear cousin; I am not so ungallant; but *à propos* of Shakespeare, shall we go to the play to-night?"

"In that I am your servant ; but you shall dine with us ; a drive in the park, and then the play after."

Aurora was charming ; and it was impossible not to be guided by her wishes in everything.

At that time I was in excellent funds. I had my pay as lieutenant of dragoons (not that it was much, Heaven knows ! to cut a figure upon) ; but I had a good share of prize-money, and a share in brass guns taken in the affairs of Emsdorff and Zirenberg, with a fair slice of a military chest that found its way quietly, sans report, into the pockets of the Scots Greys, all enabled me to take Aurora and Madame Blythe to Vauxhall, Ranelagh, the tea-gardens, the opera, the play, and always with a fair escort of flambeaux to dine with his Grace of Argyle, or to a drum at my Lady Ancrum's, to turn a card at White's when I felt so disposed, and to throw vails to those greedy vultures—the servants—a folly at that time in excess.

As we issued from the house to the carriage for our drive in the park, Aurora responded to the profound bow of a gentleman who rode past.

"That is a young Irishman who was known about town as the Penniless Adventurer," said she ; "yet he wrote a charming book on 'The Sublime and Beautiful.'"

"Edmund Burke," I exclaimed, looking after him with admiration ; "is that the great Edmund Burke?"

"Even so, with his hair all frizzed up. How oddly he wears it," said Aurora, as we seated ourselves, and Mr. Trot, after shutting the door, perched himself on the footboard behind.

At night Drury Lane Theatre presented a scene of brilliance and splendour to which I had long been un-

accustomed. Aurora was exceedingly gay and sparkling with youth, beauty, and jewels—bowing to people of good fashion in almost every box—always happy and with considerable readiness of wit, remarking several turns of the play and peculiarities of personages who were present, and in whom, she thought, I might feel interested.

The first picce, I grieve, my prudish friends, to state was Rowe's tragedy of "The Fair Penitent," which drew tears from all the brocaded dames in the boxes.

Mr. David Garrick, the manager, appeared as Lothario in a full-bottomed periwig, square-cut blue coat with buttons in size like saucers, white rolled stockings and squared-toed shoes. Mrs. Pritchard was the frail Lavinia; and sarcastic old Macklin, who hated the Scots so much, made up by pads and paint as a youth, played the part of Horatio to the great admiration of the pit, and particularly of one group, among whom Aurora pointed out to me a poet named Churchill and Dr. Johnson the great Lexicographer.

Mr. Garrick's laughable farce of the "Lying Valet" followed. A sentinel of the Foot Guards, with bayonet fixed and musket shouldered, stood at the end of the proscenium during the whole performance, at the conclusion of which, the manager and pretty Mrs. Pritchard were called before the curtain amid a storm of applause.

At the door of the box lobby we had some confusion; a hundred voices were shouting "Chair! chair! —coach, coach!" at once, and an irritable old gentleman with a very red face, drew his sword to clear the way before his party of ladies.

"Who is this passionate personage?" I inquired.

"'Tis Admiral Forbes," said Madame Blythe, "the

only Lord of the Admiralty who *refused* to sign poor Admiral Byng's death warrant."

"A Scotsman, like yourself, Basil," said Aurora, smiling.

I escorted the ladies home to Piccadilly, and assisted them to alight from their sedan chairs. As the links were extinguished, and Aurora's cheek was very near mine, I—but as it is wrong to kiss and tell, I shall close this chapter, and with it my third day in London.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE LAST.

I FOUND in Aurora an inexpressibly charming friend and companion ; thus at times, in my heart, and before my funds waxed low, I completely forgave her for being the holder, the golden-haired usurper of all that was mine by right of inheritance.

But there were other times when the old emotions of pique and anger—the old memories of wrong inflicted, and of mortifications endured by my parents and myself, blazed up within me, and made me resolve to tear myself away from London and from the silken toils that were netting round me, and vow to rejoin my regiment, which was now at winter quarters at Barentrup, in Germany.

Still I hovered between Pall Mall and Piccadilly, and when we were not at some place of amusement (whither we sometimes ventured *without* the matronage of Madame Blythe), Aurora's drawing-room was my evening resort ; for after dining at White's or at the George in the Mall I always dropped in to take "a

dish of tea," as the Londoners phrased it, at that little *guéridon*, or tripod table, with its oval teaboard of mahogany, its diminutive cups of eggshell china, filled with that fragrant and then expensive beverage, the honours of which old Madame Blythe, in her hoop petticoat, black mittens, and toupée, dispensed so gracefully.

So passed the time swiftly in amusements and gaiety. My exchequer, I have said, was waxing low. My share in the value of his Most Christian Majesty's brass guns and mortars had all vanished at Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and elsewhere, and my leave of absence was drawing to a close. The latter tidings I communicated to Aurora, and she seemed to be disturbed by them—so much so, that I felt quite pleased and flattered by her affectionate friendship. Had she wept I would have been delighted.

How strange was this tie of cousinship! Here was Aurora, one of the loveliest girls in London (which, my good reader, is saying a good deal), treating me like a friend—a brother; and she was nearer and dearer to me than friend or sister could be, so far as regard and propinquity went; yet withal, she was little more than a recent acquaintance.

It was perilous work, those daily visits to Piccadilly, and yet so pleasing; and so—and so the reader may begin to perceive the end of all this; but not exactly how it came about.

I own that I fell in love with my beautiful cousin; so had many others—among them Shirley; and I could pardon him now.

I am sure that dear old Madame Blythe, who loved me like a son, for no better reason than that I was a lieutenant of dragoons, as her husband had been in

their lover-days, suspected what was going forward. She was discreet — oh, very discreet! She never opened the drawing-room door too suddenly if we were within, but always lingered without and loudly issued an order to the cook, or to John Trot, or dropped something noisily, called to her French poodle, or played nervously with the door-handle, until Aurora and I laughed at her policy or politeness, which you will. However, when she entered, I was generally to be found on the side of the room opposite to that occupied by Aurora.

When in the dining-room, the sight of Sir Basil's portrait, and Squire Tony's too, always roused my secret anger; thus, when Aurora one day said to me playfully—

"Cousin Basil, what do you think Lady Ancrum tells me gossips say?"

"Don't know, really," replied I, briefly.

"That I am setting my cap at you!"

"Zounds! at a poor devil like me!" I exclaimed, almost gruffly. "Nonsense, Aurora! Besides, you don't wear a cap."

Aurora coloured, and her sweet face became clouded by my brusque manner.

But her remark set me thinking seriously. I had undergone some quiet quizzing from Madame Blythe, who believed in her heart that we were made for each other, and that no two young people could play a game of picquet, ombre, or chess, or dance a minuet together, without falling straightway in love; so this and my Lady Ancrum's gossip set me, I say, to think angrily, and when in such a mood, Sir Basil's insulting last will and testament, like the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, always seemed to flame before me.

I was conscious too that my cousinship and constant appearance in public with Miss Gauntlet had scared away a score of dangles and admirers, who being most of them mere macaronies, or "pretty fellows," were weak enough to leave me entire possession of the field. One or two, indeed, threatened to invite me to breathe the morning air at the back of Montague House, but somehow never put their warlike threat into execution.

I loved Aurora dearly ; but the regard I bore her was quite unlike the wild and romantic passion with which the artful Jacqueline had so suddenly inspired me, for it was based upon friendship and a knowledge of each other—upon strong confidence and thorough esteem. Could more than these four ingredients be wanted to make any marriage happy ?

It was not a passion likely to expend itself, and leave rosy little Cupid's wings, bows, arrows and all, insolvent at the end of the first year ; yet withal, pride and a sense of injury rankled deeply in my heart.

I had never told Aurora that I loved her, but she knew it well, and that she loved me I was vain enough to believe ; still the idea stung me to the soul that gossips might say that I, the disinherited and penniless cousin, married the rich one to regain my lost patrimony.

"I shall not endure it," thought I, "and so shall pack my traps and be off to the regiment !"

One evening I was seated alone by the library fire in Piccadilly, full of loving, of angry, and of doubtful thoughts which tormented me, when Aurora entered gently, and leaning over the back of my chair placed her pretty hands over my forehead and eyes in sport.

"How you stare into the fire, Basil! You will quite spoil your eyes. What do you see there?"

"I am reflecting—thinking——"

"Of the fancied battles you see among the embers—the value of coals, or what?" she asked, laughing. "Now tell me, about what were your precious thoughts?"

"They were of *you*, Aurora," said I, in a troubled voice, while taking her dear hands in mine; "my leave of absence——"

"Again, that horrid leave—well, Basil?"

"Is nearly at an end, and I must quit London, rejoin, tear myself from this," I replied, impetuously, and then added, with sudden softness, "I love you, dear Aurora—you know well that I do; but never shall it be said by the world that I married you for your fortune—as——"

"The world!" said she, interrupting me, with an air of extreme annoyance, while casting down her eyes and withdrawing her hands; "but am I then so plain—so unattractive—that no one would marry for anything else, save for this unlucky Netherwood—eh, cousin?" she added, smiling with a charming air of coquetry.

"Oh, Aurora—I wish you could see into my heart!"

"And you love me?" said she, in a low and tremulous voice.

"Dearly—most dearly!"

"Then if I married you, cousin Basil," she resumed, looking smilingly into my eyes, "might not the world say it was for your title?"

"Am I then so plain and unattractive," I was beginning, when she playfully put her hand on my

mouth; "Aurora, of the baronetcy I cannot divest myself."

"But I can *divest* myself of Netherwood," she exclaimed, and sprung from my side with flashing eyes. Then with tremulous hands she unlocked an ebony cabinet, and after a rapid search came to me with a folded document, saying, "Look, Basil, do you know this handwriting?"

"It is that of old Nathan Wylie, our grandfather's solicitor; I should know it well."

"Then read this paper, which he prepared and drew up a few weeks ago, at my especial request."

I perused it with astonishment!

It was what is legally or technically termed a "Disposition," by which Aurora divested herself of Netherwood, lands, estate, and everything, bestowing them upon me during her lifetime, with remainder to me and my heirs at her decease.

I had learned enough of law during my residence with old Nathan Wylie, the framer of this new document, to know how full, ample, and generous it was, and while I rapidly scanned it from the preamble at the beginning to the signature of Aurora at the end, she stood near me with her cheeks flushing, her eyes full of tears, and her poor little hands trembling.

"Oh, Aurora!" I exclaimed in bewilderment.

"Now cousin, do you believe me—now do you deem me sincere in wishing, at every risk, to soothe your angry pride?" she asked, with a shower of nervous tears. "None can now say that you wedded me to recover a lost patrimony, for yours it was, and is, most justly."

"Dearest Aurora, I would rather owe its restoration in another fashion, but still, my beloved, to you. Be-

hold!" and I put the deed in the fire, where it shrivelled and was consumed in a moment.

I had no more words for the occasion, but pressed Aurora to my breast. I felt that she was indeed my own—all my own; that we should be all the world to each other, and that our future would be a life of love.

My lips could not express the debt of joy and gratitude I owed to this dear girl; but though silent, friend reader, they were not perhaps idle.

Thus, without any tremendous effort of romance, but in the most ordinary and matter-of-fact way in the world, my marriage came about with cousin Aurora. She was to be my wife, and no Frenchwoman, after all.

* * * * *

And now, leaving Aurora and Madame Blythe deep in all the mystery of paduasoy skirts, calimanco petticoats, satin sacques, solitaires and négligées, head-cushions and red-heeled shoes, furbelows and flounces, bracelets, necklets, étui and appendages, long stomachers, clocked stockings, and other things which I need not enumerate—in short, arranging the full wardrobe of a wealthy and beautiful bride, while I depart to arrange all about the special licence and extended leave (taking the Horse Guards *en route*), I shall bid my friend, the reader, who has accompanied me to this happy conclusion, for a time perhaps, a kind adieu

THE END.



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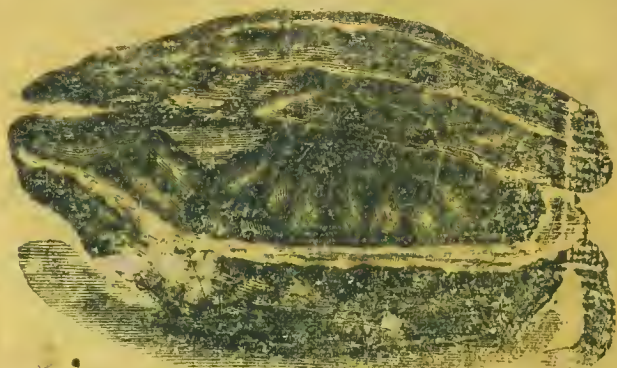
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